

DRAGON+

ICEWIND DALE

Exclusive fiction
from Chris Avellone

NEVERWINTER: STRONGHOLDS

Stake your guild's claim
to an abandoned keep

GAME ON!

A brief history of
D&D videogames

+
**D&D
ADVENTURERS
LEAGUE UPDATE**

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

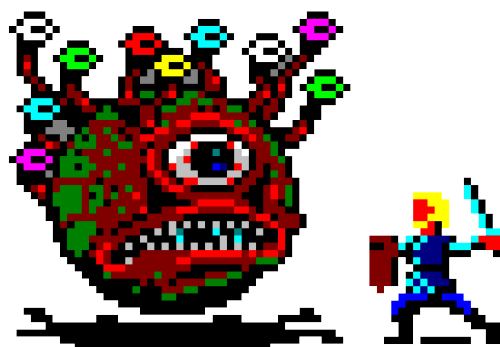
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DRAGON+ 2

Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 2

I'm delighted to welcome you to Issue 2 of Dragon+, the all-new Dungeons & Dragons app.

Dragon+ takes the traditional magazine format to the next level, making it more interactive and allowing you to enjoy it anywhere and everywhere – on smartphones, tablets or computers.



Where It Started: D&D Videogames

Let Dragon+ take you on a journey through D&D's videogame past, all the way to its modern day status as an online gaming superstar.



Exploring Sword Coast Legends

We take a closer look at the collaborative CRPG that introduces a whole new team of companions and lifts the (toilet) lid on the nasty pirate city of Luskan.



Neverwinter Strongholds

Free-to-play action MMORPG
Neverwinter will soon allow guilds to house their members in a stronghold. As you might expect, you'll need to deal with the creatures and monsters that reside there to properly earn your keep.





Streaming Highlights

Including the official D&D Podcast, composer Inon Zur on his Sword Coast Legends soundtrack, Art Director Dan Gelon hard at work prepping the Earth Myrmidon D&D mini and the team at Node Studios on a barbarian rampage!

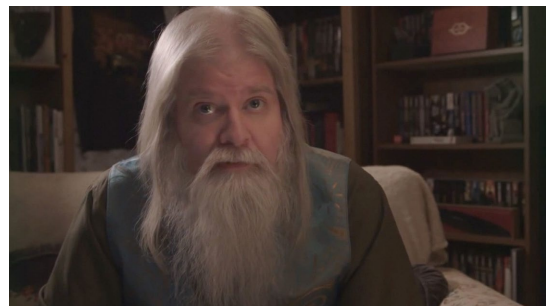
Short Fiction by CHRIS AVELLONE

Author Chris Avellone shares an exclusive short story, set in the frozen wasteland in the north of the Forgotten Realms.



Interview: Fantasy Grounds

DOUG DAVISON was so impressed with the virtual tabletop RPG software Fantasy Grounds that he bought the company. With fifth edition D&D rules now included, he showcases a tool that helps you play online and speed up your offline gameplay.



Interview: Ed Greenwood

Fantasy author ED GREENWOOD amazingly created the Forgotten Realms setting a decade before Dungeons & Dragons even existed. Still crafting a lush and vibrant universe today, his latest book Spellstorm is filled with the same level of detail as his early works.



Community: Dice Rolling Rituals

Revealing the unusual customs and habits D&D players live (and die) by.



Adventurers League

All the latest updates from the D&D Adventurers League, plus store profiles of Outlaw Moon Games & Toys in Austin, Texas and Twenty Sided Store in Brooklyn, New York.



Adventurers League Interviews



Next Issue: Dragon 03

There's no need to cast Divination to discover next issue's goodies: we speak to Forgotten Realms creator Ed Greenwood about his latest novel, remember Dungeons & Dragons videogames gone by and dig deep into the latest action RPG Sword Coast Legends.



A big thank you to the extended D&D family for their help with the creation of this issue.

DRAGON+ 2

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Matt Chapman

On the way to this page, you more than likely noticed the amazing illustration that graces this month's cover. That image comes courtesy of artist Hydro74, who's better known to his Mom as Joshua Smith. He sets the standard by being the first artist (of many!) to interpret the dragon ampersand that is such an iconic part of Dungeons & Dragons. When we caught up with him to discuss this honor, he was honest enough to share his first thought on the project with us: "Don't screw it up!"



"It's not every day you get to work with Dungeons & Dragons, which has been an essential cog in the lives of so many people for so long," he tells Dragon+. "There's a series of different artists that are going to be involved and as the first one I haven't yet seen what Wizards of the Coast allows people to get away with, so I took a fairly literal stab at it."

Given that Smith admits he "doesn't really draw dragons usually," we love what he's done with the concept. Especially those skulls and roses, which he describes as being "my kind of repertoire." If you love them too, you'll be happy to hear that you can now pre-order a t-shirt that features this brilliant new take on the D&D icon.

Moving past that eye-catching cover image, we've got a jam packed issue for you once again. Everything gets a little bit digital as we take a look back at the groundbreaking history of D&D videogames (see page five). Bringing that right up to date, we also take you deeper

into the smelly pirate world of Sword Coast Legends (page six) and the guild-friendly update Neverwinter: Strongholds (page eight). Meanwhile, the Venn diagram of tabletop and digital becomes a total eclipse as we take a look under the hood of RPG gaming software Fantasy Grounds.

As if that wasn't enough, Issue 2 also packs in so much extra material it could choke a mimic! Chow down on an exclusive piece of Icewind Dale fiction from author Chris Avellone (page eleven), listen in on our chat with Forgotten Realms creator and all-round legend Ed Greenwood (page fifteen), be amazed by the crazy dice-rolling rituals of your fellow gamers (page seventeen), and revel in the madness of our Gauntlet Gophers comic strip (page 20). Enjoy!

Matt Chapman, Editor-in-chief

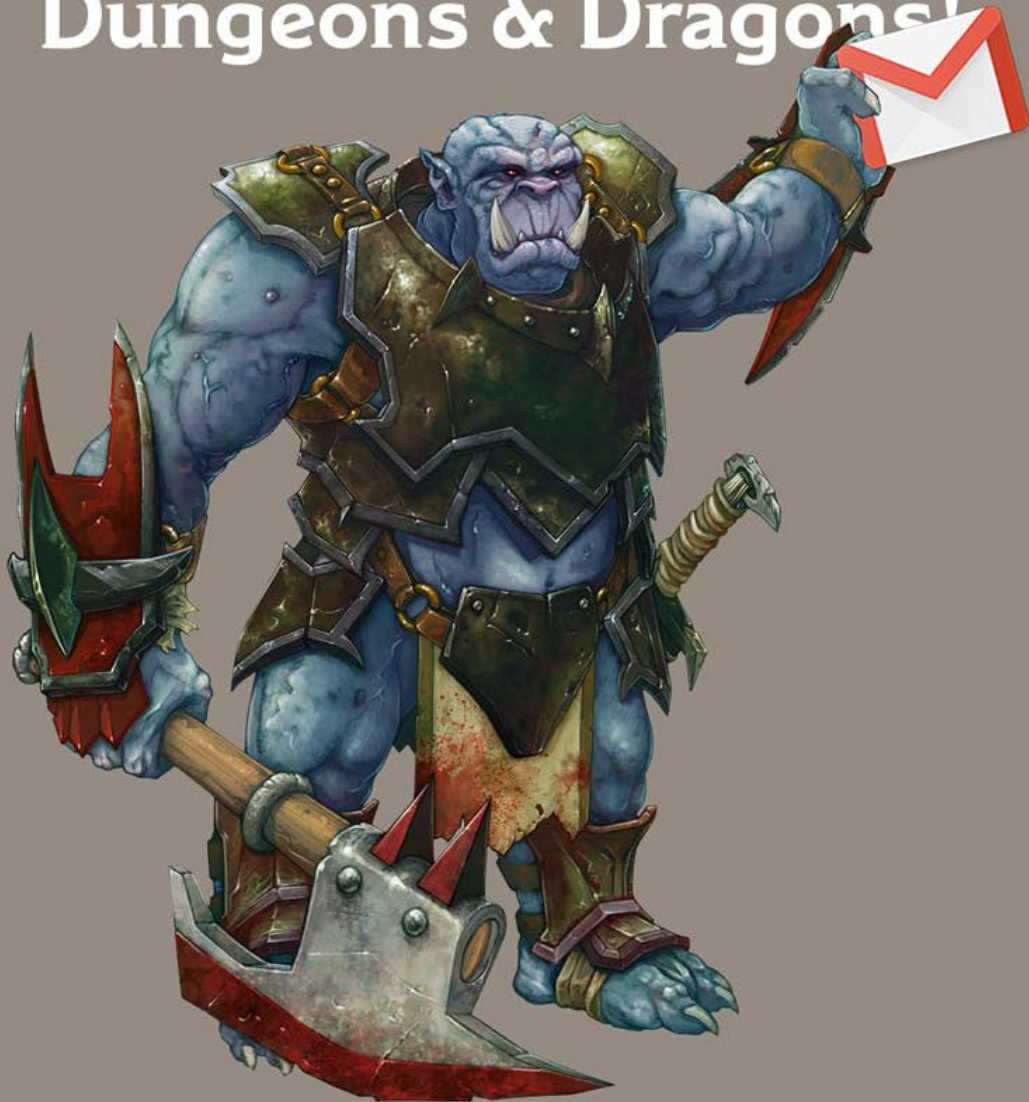
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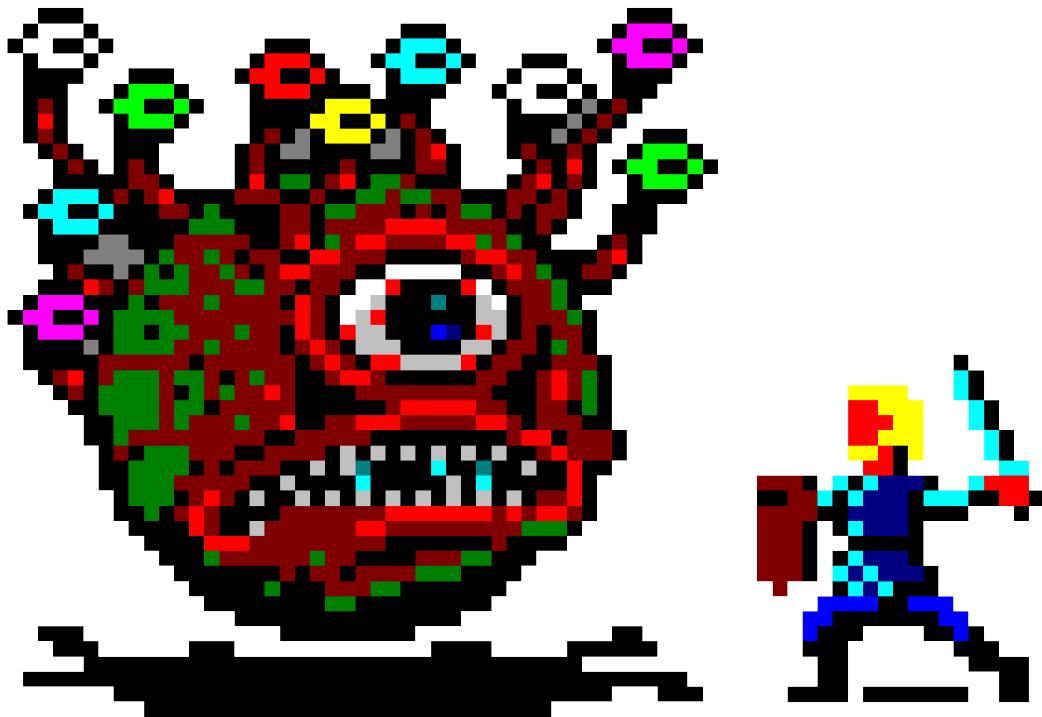
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Where It Started: D&D Videogames

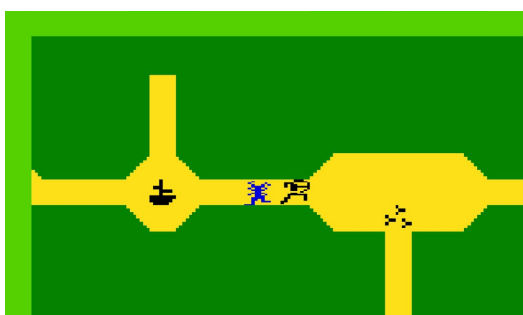
Let Dragon+ take you on a journey through D&D's videogame past, all the way to its modern day status as an online gaming superstar.

Bobby MacPherson

As MMOs duel for supremacy in a gaming market already saturated with big-budget sword-and-sorcery fare, the legacy of Dungeons & Dragons is visible in every beautifully rendered fire spell, number-crunching combat system and epic, world-shaking story.

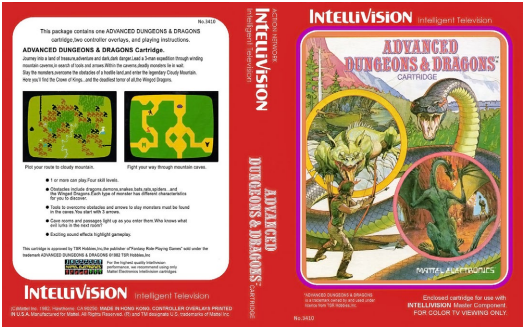
Yet it would be wrong to assume that the influence of Dungeons & Dragons on the games industry is purely an indirect one: some of the finest RPGs of the last two decades have been licensed D&D products, the industry having enjoyed its approach to simulated adventure since the early '80s.

8 BIT-BEHOLDERS



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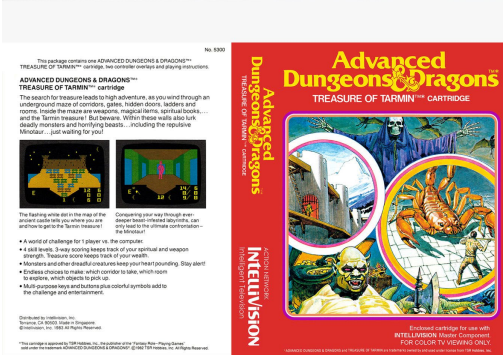
While it's generally accepted that the relationship Dungeons & Dragons has with the medium began in the late '80s with the Amiga and Apple II computers, the first real entrants were actually on the short-lived Intellivision



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received all the same.

The first truly successful foray into videogames D&D had was with the 1988 hit *Pool of Radiance*, on the Amiga and Apple II. As one might expect of an early game attempting a digital recreation of D&D’s myriad rules, *Pool of Radiance* was hard, yet rewardingly deep, with story-altering dialogue options and a simplified version of the D&D battle system. It was also the first licensed game to utilize the Forgotten Realms setting – by dropping the player into Faerûn’s Moonsea region, it situated the game within that world’s canon, which has been a staple of almost all D&D games that have followed.



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Building on *Pool of Radiance*’s template, the early-to-mid ’90s saw a slew of fantastic D&D RPGs brought to life. Far too numerous to recount in full, *Pool of Radiance*’s clearest protégés were Westwood Studio’s acclaimed first-person, point-and-click dungeon-crawler,

Eye of the Beholder, and the Dragonlance-set *Champions of Krynn*, developed by *Pool of Radiance*'s own Strategic Simulations. Though largely lost to the mists of time (but making a resurgence in popularity thanks to retro-loving Let's Play vloggers on Youtube), all three games garnered a sizeable fanbase.



Of course, the '90s didn't just see the D&D brand associated with maddeningly in-depth RPGs, as famously eccentric Japanese developer Capcom brought the franchise to arcade machines for the first time with 1993's *Dungeons & Dragons: Tower of Doom* and its 1996 sequel *Chronicles of Mystara*. The Mystara-set side-scrolling beat-'em-up surprisingly kept in line with D&D's class system, with each character representing a different adventuring archetype, replete with stats, spells and specialist items that could be picked up along the way. With their distinctly Japanese art style and breakneck pace, Capcom's games proved that the D&D brand was as diverse as its players.

ENTER BIOWARE

While certain titles such as *Eye of the Beholder* will be clear in the memory of retro gamers, the videogame almost all players and D&D fans will be aware of is *Baldur's Gate*. Bioware's isometric Forgotten Realms epic, which launched in 1998, arguably set the standard for the modern Western RPG genre for years to come. Dropping players onto the Sword Coast, *Baldur's Gate* did away with the customizable party of previous D&D games, opting instead for a blank-slate protagonist who is joined by a series of quirky, well-written companions plucked from the gamut of Forgotten Realms races and classes. *Baldur's Gate* was also the first game to implement D&D's dice-rolling combat into real-time battles, imbuing encounters with the tenseness of a tabletop game, without compromising its strategic roots.



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Hot off *Baldur's Gate's* success, Black Isle studios launched the *Icewind Dale* series, which was lighter on story and heavier on mechanics and good old fashioned adventuring. *Icewind Dale* hearkened back to the earlier D&D videogames, while maintaining that brand-new isometric sheen. Black Isle's crowning achievement, however, was arguably *Planescape: Torment*. This videogame recreated D&D's alignment system and storytelling flexibility so accurately, that it was possible to go the entire game without drawing your weapon once, proving that even D&D's more esoteric qualities could transfer to other media.



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Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance marks the first time a D&D game debuted on the PlayStation 2 console in 2001. A sort of spiritual successor to Capcom's side-scrolling beat-'em-ups, *Dark Alliance* eschewed tactical combat and world-building for fast-paced, *Diablo*-esque top-down hack-'n'-slash action. It may have been a deviation from Bioware's tried-and-tested template, but – like its Japanese forebear – *Dark Alliance* and its sequel *Dark Alliance 2* (2004) were an excuse to bring some mayhem to the Forgotten Realms.



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While perhaps a bit less iconic than D&D's isometric renaissance, Bioware's jump to full 3D in 2002 with *Neverwinter Nights* was a natural and satisfying evolution. This game cleverly looked at what made *Baldur's Gate* so great (real-time combat system, memorable

NPC party members) and left much of it untouched – aside from the inclusion of fully-3D environments. Spawning numerous expansions and an impressive sequel overseen by Obsidian Entertainment (a new studio born from the ashes of Black Isle Studios after its closure), *Neverwinter Nights* – and its sequel *Neverwinter Nights 2* – served as the template for much of Bioware’s post-D&D fare (*Knights of the Old Republic*, *Dragon Age* and the *Mass Effect* series). *Neverwinter Nights* remains well-loved to this day for its breakthroughs in allowing players to create their own content using the Aurora toolset shipped with each game copy. A vibrant community of gamers and creators at sites like NeverwinterVault.com still use the Aurora toolset to tell their stories.

ONLINE AND BEYOND

Many would argue that a true digital representation of the Dungeons & Dragons system can only be found in MMOs, a genre that holds the best chance of combining the split-second number crunching only possible in gaming, with the sense of communal adventure that made D&D popular in the first place.

D&D’s forays into the MMO market have been quietly significant. The first game to attempt an online presence was 1991’s *Neverwinter Nights*, an MS-DOS multiplayer RPG developed by Strategic Simulations. A modest commercial success, *Neverwinter Nights* was the first online game ever to display graphics, utilizing a first-person POV similar to that used in Strategic Simulations’ *Pools of Radiance*.



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However, a second significant attempt didn't come until Turbine's *Dungeons & Dragons Online* in 2006. Award-winning in its execution, *Dungeons & Dragons Online* utilized the now-familiar real-time combat and quest-heavy pre-endgame content seen in games like *World of Warcraft*, but coupled this with a levelling system similar to D&D v.3.5. *Dungeons & Dragons Online* was also significant in that it was an early adopter of the free-to-play model, managing to keep its servers ticking over healthily for nine years without the usual bombardment of micro-transactions that normally accompany any non-subscription MMOs.



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All of which brings us to D&D’s newest incarnations in gaming, *Neverwinter* and *Sword Coast Legends* (although games such as Obsidian’s *Pillars of Eternity* still fly the D&D flag). In the two years since its release, a moderation and design team has been dedicated to keeping the free-to-play title *Neverwinter* bug-free, loading it with the kind of new content usually associated with subscription-based games.



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Meanwhile, *Sword Coast Legends* is the most recent officially licensed game to represent the brand. Crafted by a team of industry veterans, the game has a compelling single-player narrative. Yet it truly shines in DM Mode, where Dungeon Masters get to create adventures for up to four online players. This real-time experience allows a DM to guide players through customizable adventures, acting as both friend and foe, much like in a tabletop roleplaying game.



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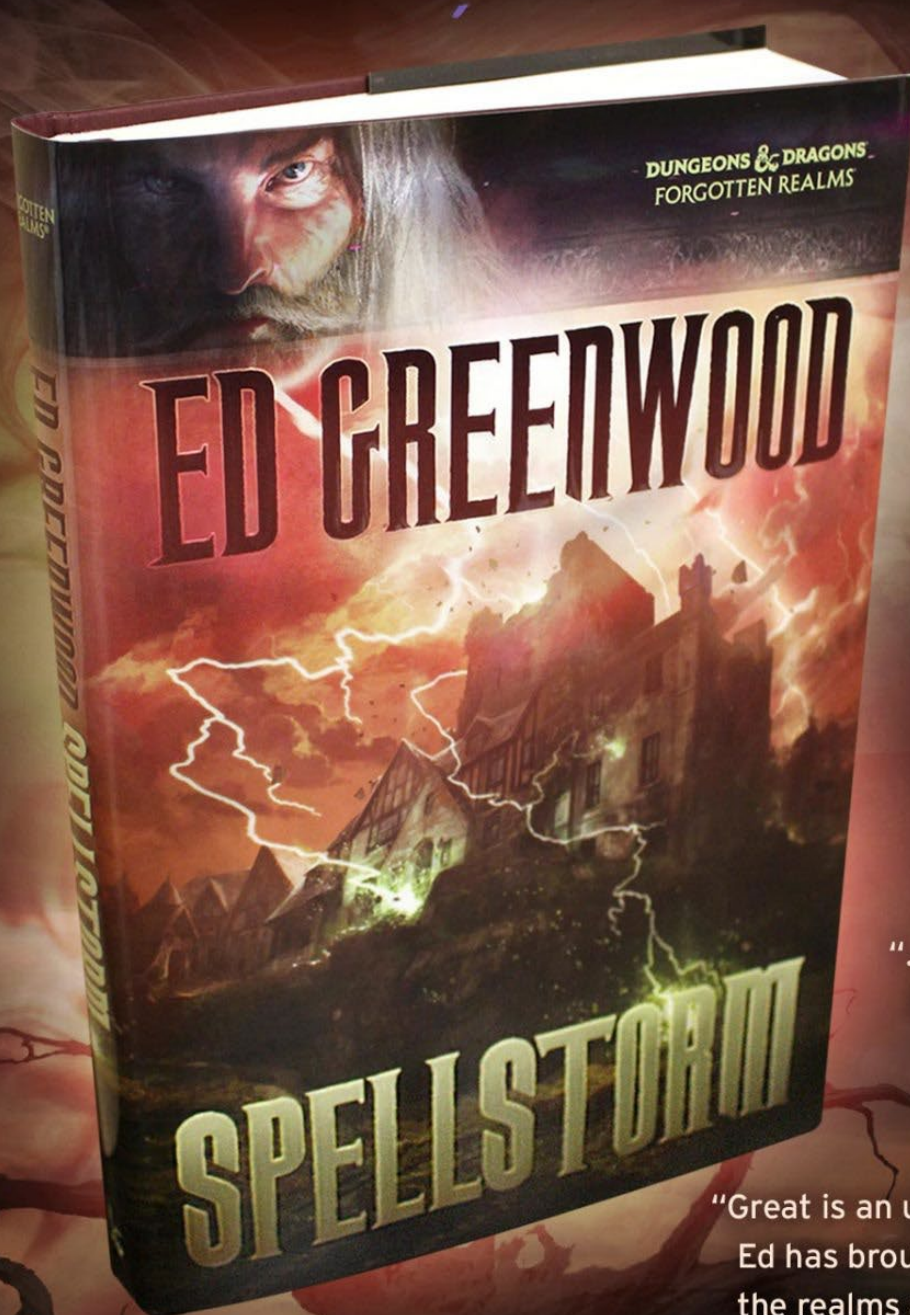


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Considering the popularity of virtual tabletops such as *Fantasy Grounds* (see our in-depth look at that system on page 13), it's clear that the future of Dungeons & Dragons can be found online. As MMOs move away from being tepid loot-hunts to become the narrative and communal experiences players enjoy in an immersive tabletop session, the perfect collision of D&D's rules system and gaming's immediacy should make for a very exciting future indeed.

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WHAT READERS ARE SAYING



"...a vintage
Realms novel!"

"Great is an understatement.
Ed has brought mystery to
the realms and I love it!"

"Ed and Elminster are both at their finest
in this book..."

"Continuously exciting throughout with the
humor and wit that is classic Ed..."

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Exploring Sword Coast Legends

We take a closer look at the collaborative CRPG that introduces a whole new team of companions and lifts the (toilet) lid on the nasty pirate city of Luskan.

Matt Chapman

As we've just ably demonstrated, Dungeons & Dragons long ago expanded beyond its pen-and-paper roots to embrace a digital world. Those decades of development have led to a new videogame that offers an all-new way to enjoy the shared D&D storytelling experience.

Sword Coast Legends does, of course, include a single-player campaign, which centers on a guild called the Order of the Burning Dawn. One night, during a routine job escorting a caravan, your character has a startlingly bad nightmare. Next morning the caravan is attacked by mercenaries, and from there begins a mystery that questions your involvement in these events, shakes the position of your guild and seeks the origin of those nightmares.

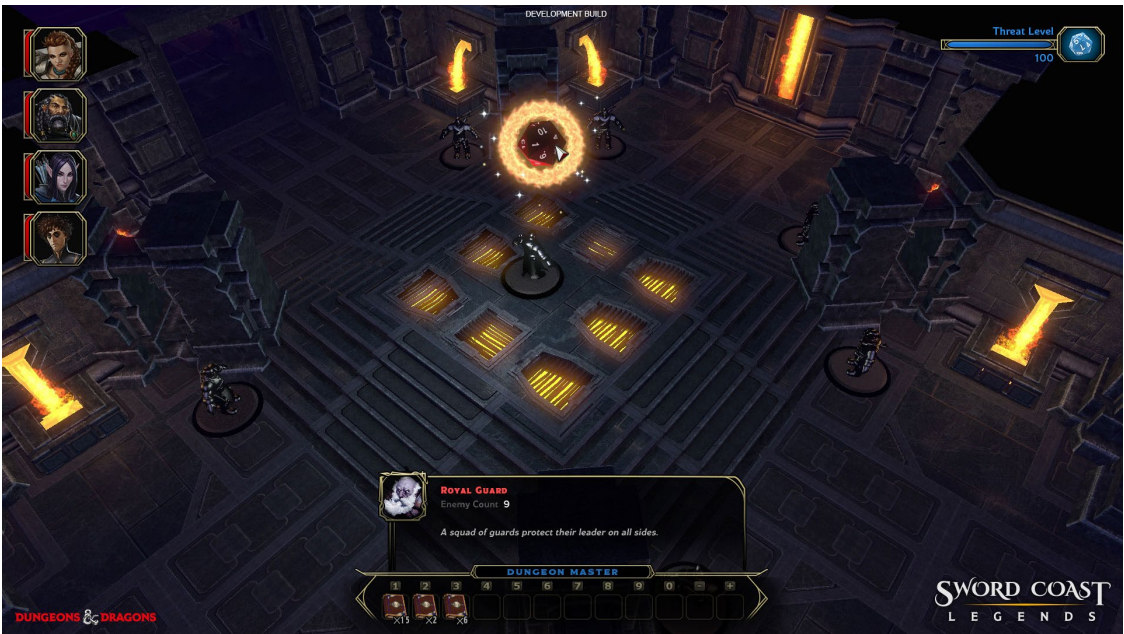


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Yet it’s the ability to create unique customizable adventures, in the same way Dungeon Masters do for the tabletop roleplaying game, which will keep players engaged long after that single-player riddle has been solved. Collaboration is the keyword here. As with the classic tabletop RPG, a DM doesn’t set his sights on decimating a party, but seeks to challenge up to four players in a non-adversarial and fun way. Setting up a dungeon, populating it with creatures and choosing its mood theme for lighting and fog is just the start.



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“The dungeon is created randomly based on the parameters the Dungeon Master has set. But once you’re in there, the DM has to be attentive,” says Tim Schwalk, design director at n-Space. “A DM can change encounters to make them easier or harder, based on how the party is doing. If they’re struggling, the DM can take enemies away, or demote them and make them a little bit weaker. Or if the party is finding success, the DM can promote creatures and give them a buff to make them a little bit tougher. And if there are certain enemies the DM sees you’re struggling against, they can remove them or add more. So if you’re having trouble dealing with fire, they can add additional enemies that deal fire damage.



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“They can also drop traps to make your time a little more difficult, lock and unlock doors based on how you’re doing, make rooms secret so you have to search around to find treasure, and drop enemies anywhere they want.”



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The actions of those enemies can be controlled by a Dungeon Master in a similar way to real-time strategy games. That’s particularly helpful when you want to make sure that the creatures don’t gang up on a character. “If a DM wants to have these three guys go over this way and have those two guys come that way and the other guy just attack your wizard, they have that amount of control,” says Schwalk. “So it really replicates that experience on the tabletop of keeping things balanced and challenging for the players. You’re going to do what makes sense for the encounter and for the party.”

A DM can even possess enemies to take direct control of their actions. “And that makes them very difficult,” adds Dan Tudge, Director Sword Coast Legends.

COASTAL PATH



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As you’ll have guessed from the name, *Sword Coast Legends* takes place along that iconic coastline – all the way from the sewers in the city of Luskan, as far East as the Evermoors, and down into the Underdark. If a setting doesn’t already exist, Dungeon Masters will be able to create their own using an existing environment as a template.

Tudge says his team wanted to make sure their writing was well grounded in that region’s lore, so it feels like you’re actually in the Forgotten Realms. “Jay [Turner] and I are always sitting in his office saying, ‘this junk lute should be from Cormyr or we should really be talking about this from Neverwinter because that’s where it happens,’” he says.



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Fans of the Forgotten Realms will also get to see much more of Luskan than its sanitary system. The city has appeared in a number of recent novels by R. A. Salvatore and the character of Jarlaxle has lived there for a while. Tudge is aware it’s a city that hasn’t been greatly explored in a computer roleplaying game before, calling it “our Baldur’s Gate or city of Neverwinter.” Turner has an even better description for it: “It’s a dirty, nasty pirate city, so that’s all kinds of fun.”



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Chris Bromby, Art Director at n-Space, says that plenty of areas within the Luskan city walls will feature in *Sword Coast Legends*. “We have this whole cemetery area that’s pretty cool and is its own little biome. And we have all the unique interiors throughout the city that you can go inside and explore, including the Cutlass and the staples of the city that have been talked about in books but you’ve

never seen what they look like,” he reveals.



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COMPANIONS



One of the elements that made classic CRPGs such as *Baldur’s Gate* and *Icwind Dale* so good was their use of companions. Fans of those franchises should steel themselves for a nostalgic buzz, as *Sword Coast Legends* includes plenty of formidable and unforgettable characters to help you on your way. Schwalk calls them a diverse array of personalities that you’ll be carrying through the Forgotten Realms.

Character Sheets

In celebration of these new allies, Wizards of the Coast has brought five of them to life for use in the tabletop roleplaying game. Tap the button below to see these digital creations (Bryn Lightfingers, Hommet Shaw, Illydia Maethellyn, Jarhild Stoneforge, and Larethar Gulfrin) transformed for use in tabletop play.

[SEE THEM NOW](#)

“We looked at a lot of those old titles and the thing that resonated with us most strongly – not just as their creators but also as players – was the companions,” admits Tudge. “All of my most memorable moments, in the *Baldur’s Gate* series in particular, center on my

interactions with those companions.”

READ ABOUT THE COMPANIONS

BRYN LIGHTFINGERS



The Lightfingers family may not be renowned throughout the land, but that doesn't stop them from thinking they should be. A clan of strongheart halflings based in Red Larch, the Lightfingers built a reputation for some of the finest crumblecakes in the region. When Bryn and her hotheaded brother Belamy came of age, however, they scorned their family's baking traditions for a more perilous road: that of the adventurer. Bryn trained among the rangers of the Ardeep Forest until she and her band were chased out by the Eldreth Veluuthra. She used her wilderness skills to survive on her own until her brother Belamy approached her about joining an adventurers' guild known as the Order of the Burning Dawn. While she shares her brother's tendency toward a quick temper, her curiosity and open mind make her a valuable member. These days, most consider Bryn leadership material, as long as she can keep her attitude in check.

DEMON DAYS

Sword Coast Legends is available for preorder now but the team at n-Space won't be resting on their laurels once it does go on sale. They're already working on the first expansion pack, which will be based on the *Rage of Demons* storyline set to sweep the wider Dungeons & Dragons world later this year. If you were having any difficulty with the '*Legends*' part of the game's title, the inclusion of one iconic D&D superstar will instantly put your mind at rest.

“Renegade drow ranger Drizzt Do'Urden is going to be in the *Rage of Demons* expansion pack. You will meet and interact with Drizzt in that campaign,” says Tudge. “We got quite a bit of feedback from the community and I actually was surprised by how many fans there are of Drizzt – he's definitely a huge character. I was always a fan but I

didn't realize there were as many people who were as excited as I was."

We count ourselves among that number and can't wait to go adventuring alongside Drizzt when the *Rage of Demons* expansion pack launches later this year.

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Bryn Lightfingers

CHARACTER NAME

Ranger 3

CLASS & LEVEL

Strongheart Halfling

RACE

Outlander

BACKGROUND

Neutral Good

ALIGNMENT

PLAYER NAME

EXPERIENCE POINTS

STRENGTH

9

-1

DEXTERITY

16

+3

CONSTITUTION

14

+2

INTELLIGENCE

10

+0

WISDOM

14

+2

CHARISMA

12

+1

INSPIRATION

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

- ☒ +1 Strength
- ☒ +5 Dexterity
- ☐ +2 Constitution
- ☐ +0 Intelligence
- ☐ +2 Wisdom
- ☐ +1 Charisma

SAVING THROWS

- ☐ +3 Acrobatics (Dex)
- ☐ +2 Animal Handling (Wis)
- ☐ +0 Arcana (Int)
- ☒ +1 Athletics (Str)
- ☐ +1 Deception (Cha)
- ☐ +0 History (Int)
- ☐ +2 Insight (Wis)
- ☐ +1 Intimidation (Cha)
- ☐ +0 Investigation (Int)
- ☐ +2 Medicine (Wis)
- ☒ +2 Nature (Int)
- ☒ +4 Perception (Wis)
- ☐ +1 Performance (Cha)
- ☐ +1 Persuasion (Cha)
- ☐ +0 Religion (Int)
- ☐ +3 Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- ☒ +5 Stealth (Dex)
- ☒ +4 Survival (Wis)

SKILLS

14

ARMOR CLASS

+3

INITIATIVE

25 ft.

SPEED

Hit Point Maximum 28

CURRENT HIT POINTS

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Total 3d10

HIT DICE

SUCCESSES

FAILURES

DEATH SAVES

My natural curiosity led me away from home, and keeps me on the move from place to place.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

It is each person's responsibility to make the most happiness for the whole group.

IDEALS

I will bring terrible wrath down upon the Eldreth Veluuthra, who chased me from the Ardeep Forest.

BONDS

I have a quick temper in times of high stress and potential conflict.

FLAWS

NAME

ATK BONUS

DAMAGE/TYPE

sword

+5

1d6+3

dagger*

+5

1d4+3

shortbow*

+5

1d6+3

*thrown dagger range (20/60)

*shortbow range (80/320)

Spell Slots: 3 1st

Spell Save DC 12; Spell Attack +4

Spells Known

1st: ensnaring strike, hunter's mark, longstrider

ATTACKS & SPELLCASTING

14

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Armor.
Light armor, Medium armor, Shields

Weapons.
Simple weapons, Martial weapons

Tools.
Musical Instrument (shawm)

Languages.
Common, Draconic, Elvish, Halfling

OTHER PROFICIENCIES & LANGUAGES

CP

SP

EP

GP

PP

Worn.
leather armor, traveler's clothes, shortsword, dagger, shortbow, quiver with 20 arrows

Carried.
backpack- bedroll, mess kit, tinderbox, 10 torches, 10 days rations, waterskin, 50 ft. hempen rope, hunting trap, lucky rabbit's foot, belt pouch

EQUIPMENT

Lucky.

When Bryn rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, she can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

Brave.

Bryn has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Halfling Nimbleness.

Bryn can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than hers.

Stout Resilience.

Bryn has advantage on saving throws against poison, and she has resistance against poison damage.

Favored Enemy (humanoids).

Bryn has advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks to track elves and kobolds, as well as on Intelligence checks to recall information about them.

Natural Explorer.

When Bryn makes an Intelligence or Wisdom check related her favored terrain (forest), her proficiency bonus is doubled if she is using a skill she is proficient in. Additional benefits can be found on page 91 of the Player's Handbook.

Fighting Style (Two-Weapon Fighting).

When Bryn engages in two-weapon fighting, she can add her ability modifier to the damage of the second attack.

Ranger Archetype (Hunter).

Horde Breaker. Once on each of Bryn's turns when she makes a weapon attack, she can make another attack with the same weapon against a different creature that is within 5 feet of the original target and within range of her weapon.

Primeval Awareness.

Bryn can use her action and expend one ranger spell slot to focus her awareness of the region around her. For 1 minute per level of the spell slot she expends, she can sense whether the following types of creatures are present within 1 mile of her (or within 6 miles if she is in a forest): aberrations, celestials, dragons, elementals, fey, fiends, and undead. This feature does not reveal the creatures' location or number.

Wanderer.

Bryn has an excellent memory for maps and geography, and she can always recall the general layout of terrain, settlements, and other features around her. In addition, Bryn can find food and fresh water for herself and up to five other people each day, provided the land offers berries, small game, water, and so forth.

FEATURES & TRAITS

Hommet Shaw

CHARACTER NAME

Wizard 3

CLASS & LEVEL

Human

RACE

Sage

BACKGROUND

Neutral

ALIGNMENT

PLAYER NAME

EXPERIENCE POINTS

STRENGTH

11

+0

DEXTERITY

14

+2

CONSTITUTION

16

+3

INTELLIGENCE

16

+3

WISDOM

10

+0

CHARISMA

10

+0

INSPIRATION

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

- ☐ +0 Strength
- ☐ +2 Dexterity
- ☐ +3 Constitution
- ☒ +5 Intelligence
- ☒ +2 Wisdom
- ☐ +0 Charisma

SAVING THROWS

- ☐ +2 Acrobatics (Dex)
- ☐ +0 Animal Handling (Wis)
- ☒ +5 Arcana (Int)
- ☐ +0 Athletics (Str)
- ☐ +0 Deception (Cha)
- ☒ +5 History (Int)
- ☐ +0 Insight (Wis)
- ☐ +0 Intimidation (Cha)
- ☒ +5 Investigation (Int)
- ☒ +2 Medicine (Wis)
- ☐ +3 Nature (Int)
- ☐ +0 Perception (Wis)
- ☐ +0 Performance (Cha)
- ☐ +0 Persuasion (Cha)
- ☐ +3 Religion (Int)
- ☐ +2 Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- ☐ +2 Stealth (Dex)
- ☐ +0 Survival (Wis)

SKILLS

12

ARMOR CLASS

+2

INITIATIVE

30 ft.

SPEED

Hit Point Maximum 23

CURRENT HIT POINTS

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Total 3d6

HIT DICE

SUCCESSES

FAILURES

DEATH SAVES

I use polysyllabic words that convey the impression of great erudition.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Nothing should fetter the infinite possibility inherent in all forms of existence.

IDEALS

Undeath is the key to unlocking the vast potential of the multiverse... all I need is the key.

BONDS

Most people scream and run when they see the undead. I stop and take notes on its anatomy.

FLAWS

NAME

ATK BONUS

DAMAGE/TYPE

staff

+2

1d8

dagger*

+4

1d4+2

*thrown dagger range (20/60)

Spells Prepared 6; Spell Save DC 13; Spell Attack +5

Cantrips: chill touch, light, shocking grasp

Spellbook

1st (4/day): detect magic (r), identify (r), feather fall, mage armor, magic missile, ray of sickness, shield, Tenser's floating disc (r)

2nd (2/day): misty step, ray of enfeeblement

(r) Ritual Casting.

Hommet can cast a wizard spell as a ritual if that spell has the ritual tag and he has the spell in his spellbook. He doesn't need to have the spell prepared.

ATTACKS & SPELLCASTING

10

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Weapons.
Dagger, Dart, Sling, Quarterstaff, Light Crossbow

Languages.
Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Infernal

OTHER PROFICIENCIES & LANGUAGES

CP

SP

EP

GP

PP

Worn.
quarterstaff, component pouch, 2 daggers, common clothes

Carried.
backpack- bedroll, mess kit, tinderbox, 10 days rations, waterskin, 50 ft. hempen rope, bottle of black ink, quill, small knife, belt pouch, spellbook

10

EQUIPMENT

Arcane Recovery.

Once per day when Hommet finishes a short rest, he can choose expended spell slots to recover. The spell slots can have a combined level that is equal to or less than half Hommet's wizard level (rounded up), and none of the slots can be 6th level or higher.

Arcane Tradition (Necromancy).
Necromancy Savant.

The gold and time Hommet must spend to copy a necromancy spell into his spellbook is halved.

Grim Harvest.

Once per turn when you kill one or more creatures with a spell of 1st level or higher, you regain hit points equal to twice the spell's level, or three times its level if the spell belongs to the School of Necromancy. You don't gain this benefit for killing constructs or undead.

Researcher.

When Hommet attempts to learn or recall a piece of lore, if he does not know that information, he often knows where and from whom he can obtain it. Usually, this information comes from a library, scriptorium, university, or a sage or other learned person or creature.

FEATURES & TRAITS

Illydia Maethellyn

CHARACTER NAME

Cleric 3

CLASS & LEVEL

Moon Elf

RACE

Noble

BACKGROUND

Chaotic Good

ALIGNMENT

PLAYER NAME

EXPERIENCE POINTS

STRENGTH

9

-1

DEXTERITY

16

+3

CONSTITUTION

10

+0

INTELLIGENCE

12

+1

WISDOM

14

+2

CHARISMA

14

+2

INSPIRATION

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

- ☐ -1 Strength
- ☐ +3 Dexterity
- ☐ +0 Constitution
- ☐ +1 Intelligence
- ☒ +4 Wisdom
- ☒ +4 Charisma

SAVING THROWS

- ☐ +3 Acrobatics (Dex)
- ☐ +2 Animal Handling (Wis)
- ☐ +1 Arcana (Int)
- ☐ -1 Athletics (Str)
- ☐ +2 Deception (Cha)
- ☒ +3 History (Int)
- ☒ +4 Insight (Wis)
- ☐ +2 Intimidation (Cha)
- ☐ +1 Investigation (Int)
- ☒ +4 Medicine (Wis)
- ☒ +3 Nature (Int)
- ☒ +4 Perception (Wis)
- ☐ +2 Performance (Cha)
- ☒ +4 Persuasion (Cha)
- ☒ +1 Religion (Int)
- ☐ +3 Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- ☐ +3 Stealth (Dex)
- ☐ +2 Survival (Wis)

SKILLS

15

ARMOR CLASS

+3

INITIATIVE

30 ft.

SPEED

Hit Point Maximum 18

CURRENT HIT POINTS

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Total 3d8

HIT DICE

SUCCESSES

FAILURES

DEATH SAVES

The common folk love me for my kindness and generosity.

Despite my noble birth, I do not place myself above other folk. We all have the same blood.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

It is my duty to protect and care for other good folk.

IDEALS

Nothing is more important than the safety and well-being of my friends and family.

BONDS

By my words and actions, I have brought shame to my family.

FLAWS

NAME

ATK BONUS

DAMAGE/TYPE

shrt sword

+5

1d6+3

longbow*

+5

1d8+3

*longbow range (150/600)

Spells Prepared 5; Spell Save DC 12; Spell Attack +4

Cantrips: guidance, sacred flame, spare the dying

Spellbook
1st (4/day): command, identify (r); cure wounds, guiding bolt, sanctuary

2nd (2/day): augury (r), suggestion; lesser restoration, prayer of healing

(r) Ritual Casting.
Illydia can cast a cleric spell as a ritual if that spell has the ritual tag and she has the spell prepared.

ATTACKS & SPELLCASTING

Darkvision.

Accustomed to the twilight forests and the night sky, Illydia has superior vision in dark and dim conditions. She can see in dim light within 60 feet of her as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. Illydia can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Fey Ancestry.

Illydia has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Trance.

Illydia doesn't need to sleep. Instead, she meditates deeply, remaining semiconscious, for 4 hours a day. While meditating, she can dream after a fashion; such dreams are actually mental exercises that have become reflexive through years of practice. After resting in this way, Illydia gains the same benefit that a human does from 8 hours of sleep.

Elf Weapon Training.

Illydia has proficiency with the longsword, shortsword, shortbow, and longbow.

Cantrip.

Illydia knows the message cantrip from the wizard spell list. Intelligence is her spellcasting ability for it.

Knowledge Domain

Channel Divinity (1/rest)

Turn Undead.

As an action, you present Illydia presents her holy symbol and speaks a prayer censuring the undead. Each undead that can see or hear her within 30 feet, must make a Wisdom saving throw. If the creature fails its saving throw, it is turned for 1 minute or until it takes any damage. A turned creature must spend its turns trying to move as far away from Illydia as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of her. It also can't take reactions. For its action, it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature can use the Dodge action.

Knowledge of the Ages.

Illydia can use her Channel Divinity to tap into a divine well of knowledge. As an action, she chooses one skill or tool. For 10 minutes, she has proficiency with the chosen skill or tool.

FEATURES & TRAITS

14

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Armor.
Light armor, Medium armor, Shields

Weapons.
Simple weapons

Tools.
Gaming set (dragonchess)

Languages.
Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish, Sylvan

OTHER PROFICIENCIES & LANGUAGES

CP

SP

EP

GP

PP

25

Worn.
shortsword, longbow, quiver with 20 arrows, chain shirt, holy symbol, fine clothes, signet ring

Carried.
backpack- blanket, 10 candles, tinderbox, alms box, 2 blocks of incense, censer, vestments, 2 days rations, waterskin, scroll of pedigree, purse

EQUIPMENT

Jarhild Stoneforge

CHARACTER NAME

Fighter 3

CLASS & LEVEL

Shield Dwarf

RACE

Soldier

BACKGROUND

Lawful Good

ALIGNMENT

PLAYER NAME

EXPERIENCE POINTS

STRENGTH

16

+3

DEXTERITY

10

+0

CONSTITUTION

16

+3

INTELLIGENCE

12

+1

WISDOM

13

+1

CHARISMA

10

+0

INSPIRATION

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

- ☒ +5 Strength
- ☐ +0 Dexterity
- ☒ +5 Constitution
- ☐ +1 Intelligence
- ☐ +1 Wisdom
- ☐ +0 Charisma

SAVING THROWS

- ☐ +0 Acrobatics (Dex)
- ☐ +1 Animal Handling (Wis)
- ☐ +1 Arcana (Int)
- ☒ +5 Athletics (Str)
- ☐ +0 Deception (Cha)
- ☒ +3 History (Int)
- ☐ +1 Insight (Wis)
- ☒ +2 Intimidation (Cha)
- ☐ +1 Investigation (Int)
- ☐ +1 Medicine (Wis)
- ☐ +1 Nature (Int)
- ☐ +1 Perception (Wis)
- ☐ +0 Performance (Cha)
- ☐ +0 Persuasion (Cha)
- ☐ +1 Religion (Int)
- ☐ +0 Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- ☐ +0 Stealth (Dex)
- ☒ +3 Survival (Wis)

SKILLS

17

ARMOR CLASS

+0

INITIATIVE

25 ft.

SPEED

Hit Point Maximum 31

CURRENT HIT POINTS

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Total 3d10

HIT DICE

SUCCESSES

FAILURES

DEATH SAVES

Jarhild can stare down a hell hound without flinching. She is full of inspiring and cautionary tales from her experience relevant to almost every combat situation.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Jarhild's lot is to lay down her life in the defense of others.

IDEALS

My honor is my life.

BONDS

Jarhild would rather eat her armor than admit when she is wrong.

FLAWS

NAME

ATK BONUS

DAMAGE/TYPE

longsword

+5

1d8+3

handaxe*

+5

1d6+3

*thrown handaxe range (20/60)

ATTACKS & SPELLCASTING

Darkvision.

Accustomed to life underground, Jarhild has superior vision in dark and dim conditions. She can see in dim light within 60 feet of her as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. Jarhild can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Dwarven Resilience.

Jarhild has advantage on saving throws against poison, and she has resistance against poison damage.

Stonecunning.

Whenever Jarhild makes an Intelligence (History) check related to the origin of stonework, she is considered proficient in the History skill and adds double her proficiency bonus to the check.

Fighting Style (Defense).

While Jarhild is wearing armor, she gains a +1 bonus to AC.

Second Wind.

On her turn, Jarhild can use a bonus action to regain hit points equal to 1d10+3. Once she uses this feature, Jarhild must finish a short or long rest before she can use it again.

Action Surge.

On her turn, Jarhild can take one additional action on top of her regular action and a possible bonus action.

Martial Archetype (Champion)

Improved Critical.

Jarhild's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Military Rank.

Jarhild has attained the rank of sergeant from her career as a soldier. Soldiers loyal to her former military organization still recognize her authority and influence, and they defer to Jarhild if they are of a lower rank. Jarhild can invoke her rank to exert influence over soldiers and requisition simple equipment or horses for temporary use. She can also usually gain access to friendly military encampments and fortresses where her rank is recognized.

FEATURES & TRAITS

11

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Armor.
All Armor & Shields

Weapons.
Simple weapons, Martial weapons

Tools.
Smith's Tools, Vehicles (land), Gaming Set (Dragonchess)

Languages.
Common, Dwarvish

OTHER PROFICIENCIES & LANGUAGES

CP

SP

EP

CP

CP

PP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

CP

Worn.
scale mail, longsword, shield, 2 handaxes, common clothes

Carried.
backpack- crowbar, hammer, 10 pitons, 10 torches, tinderbox, 10 days rations, waterskin, 50 ft. hempen rope, insignia of rank, belt pouch, dragonchess set

10

EQUIPMENT

Larethar Gulgrin

CHARACTER NAME

Rogue 3

CLASS & LEVEL

Gold Dwarf

RACE

Criminal

BACKGROUND

Neutral

ALIGNMENT

PLAYER NAME

EXPERIENCE POINTS

STRENGTH

12

+1

DEXTERITY

16

+3

CONSTITUTION

14

+2

INTELLIGENCE

14

+2

WISDOM

10

+0

CHARISMA

9

-1

INSPIRATION

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

- SAVING THROWS
- ☐ +1 Strength
 - ☒ +5 Dexterity
 - ☐ +2 Constitution
 - ☒ +4 Intelligence
 - ☐ +0 Wisdom
 - ☐ -1 Charisma

- SKILLS
- ☐ +3 Acrobatics (Dex)
 - ☐ +0 Animal Handling (Wis)
 - ☐ +2 Arcana (Int)
 - ☒ +5 Athletics (Str)
 - ☒ +1 Deception (Cha)
 - ☐ +2 History (Int)
 - ☒ +2 Insight (Wis)
 - ☐ -1 Intimidation (Cha)
 - ☒ +4 Investigation (Int)
 - ☐ +0 Medicine (Wis)
 - ☐ +2 Nature (Int)
 - ☐ +0 Perception (Wis)
 - ☐ -1 Performance (Cha)
 - ☐ -1 Persuasion (Cha)
 - ☐ +2 Religion (Int)
 - ☒ +5 Sleight of Hand (Dex)
 - ☒ +5 Stealth (Dex)
 - ☐ +0 Survival (Wis)

15

ARMOR CLASS

+3

INITIATIVE

25 ft.

SPEED

Hit Point Maximum 27

CURRENT HIT POINTS

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Total 3d8

HIT DICE

SUCCESSES

FAILURES

DEATH SAVES

The best way to get me to do something is to tell me I can't do it.

Wisecracking has gotten me into trouble, and likely will again.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

I am loyal to my friends (Illydia in particular), not any ideals, and everyone else can take a long walk off a short pier.

IDEALS

I will become a hero in the eyes of Illydia.

BONDS

When I see something valuable, I can't think about anything but how to steal it.

FLAWS

NAME

ATK BONUS

DAMAGE/TYPE

shrt sword

+5

1d6+3

dagger*

+5

1d4+3

crossbow*

+5

1d8+3

*thrown dagger range (20/60)

*light crossbow range (80/320)

ATTACKS & SPELLCASTING

Darkvision.

Accustomed to life underground, Larethar has superior vision in dark and dim conditions. He can see in dim light within 60 feet as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. Larethar can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Dwarven Resilience.

Larethar has advantage on saving throws against poison, and he has resistance against poison damage.

Stonecunning.

Whenever Larethar makes an Intelligence (History) check related to the origin of stonework, he is considered proficient in the History skill and adds double his proficiency bonus to the check.

Dwarven Toughness.

Larethar's hit point maximum increases by 1 per level. This is already figured into his total.

Expertise.

Larethar's proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check he makes that uses either Athletics or his thieves' tools

Sneak Attack.

Once per turn, Larethar can deal an extra 2d6 damage to one creature he hits with an attack if he has advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use a finesse or a ranged weapon. He doesn't need advantage on the attack roll if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, that enemy isn't incapacitated, and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Cunning Action.

Larethar can take a bonus action on each of his turns in combat. This action can be used only to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Roguish Archetype (Thief)

Fast Hands.

Larethar can use the bonus action granted by his Cunning Action to make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, use his thieves' tools to disarm a trap or open a lock, or take the Use an Object action.

Second-Story Work.

Climbing no longer costs Larethar extra movement. In addition, when he makes a running jump, the distance he can cover increases by a number of feet equal to his Dexterity modifier.

Criminal Contact.

Larethar has a reliable and trustworthy contact who acts as his liaison to a network of other criminals. He knows how to get messages to and from his contact, even over great distances; specifically, Larethar knows the local messengers, corrupt caravan masters, and seedy sailors who can deliver messages for him.

FEATURES & TRAITS

10

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Armor.
Light armor

Weapons.
Simple weapons, Hand Crossbows, Longswords, Rapiers, Shortswords

Tools.
Gaming set (dice), Thieves' tools (+7)

Languages.
Common, Dwarvish, Thieves' Cant

OTHER PROFICIENCIES & LANGUAGES

CP

SP

EP

GP

PP

15

Worn.
short sword, light crossbow, 20 bolts, 2 daggers, thieves' tools, studded leather armor, dark common clothes with hood

Carried.
backpack- bag of 1000 ball bearings, 10 ft. string, bell, 5 candles, crowbar, hammer, 10 pitons, hooded lantern, 2 flasks of oil, 5 days rations, tinderbox, waterskin, 50 ft. hempen rope, belt pouch

EQUIPMENT



Neverwinter Strongholds

Free-to-play action MMORPG Neverwinter will soon allow guilds to house their members in a stronghold. As you might expect, you'll need to deal with the creatures and monsters that reside there to properly earn your keep.

Matt Chapman

The *Neverwinter* MMORPG is constantly being expanded but if you expected the latest update to simply add more creatures or a higher level cap, you'd be sadly mistaken.

The seventh major update for the videogame focuses on strongholds, where players join with their guild mates to flush out monsters and take control of settlements for their own use. Having claimed an abandoned keep from the wild, they must build it back into its former glory on the game's largest map.

Neverwinter: Strongholds will initially be released on PC this summer and will follow on the Xbox One at a later date. The game is free to play (with an Xbox Live Gold membership on that console, sold separately), with all content open for every player to experience – from first level to the current cap.

Here are five things you need to know about the upcoming *Neverwinter: Strongholds* expansion pack from Cryptic Studios.



1) TAKING OWNERSHIP

Your guild may already have status within the city of Neverwinter, but now it has its very own keep. Although you've been handed the keys, it's up to you and your guild to make sure it doesn't fall prey to the creatures and monsters that reside there. Once the keep has been secured, guilds will work to solidify their foothold, by clearing the surrounding wilderness areas and building defenses to fend off attackers.



2) BUILDING BRINGS BONUSES

As the lands are cleared, guilds can build defenses both in and around their strongholds to protect the keep. This includes structures such as archer towers and barracks to house additional armed troops. Once word spreads that a new settlement has been secured, it will begin to attract new NPCs who have heard about it – such as merchants. Eventually, it may become like a bustling town.



3) EXCLUSIVITY

Guilds have been a cornerstone of *Neverwinter* since its inception and have offered players the opportunity to unite under a single name, socialize with like-minded adventurers and aid each other in times of need. Only members of your guild will have access to this territory and players who aren't aligned won't simply be able to wander in and out.



4) NO TIME COMMITMENT

Smaller guilds who are able to dedicate less time and resources to the task of securing their stronghold won't be penalized. Any work that has been carried out will remain and your keep won't deteriorate below the level you raise it to if you don't happen to check in every day. So if the boss/your teacher dumps a major two-week project on you, you'll be fine to bow out for that period in the knowledge your keep is safe.



5) GUILD VERSUS GUILD

The wilderness and orcs aren't the only things you may need to defend your keep against. Following the launch of *Strongholds*, when guilds have had some time to start building up their defenses, a new PvP-style challenge will be added. Guilds that choose to battle other guilds will try and storm an enemy's keep, as that guild's players try to take yours. Naturally, this feature will be opt-in, so your Stronghold won't be under siege if your guild is away.



Battles will include huge siege structures that increase a guild's ability to wage war against another keep and the developers promise to scale battles to include as many warriors as possible. "Strongholds gives *Neverwinter* players the ability to create their own stories of banding together with their guild to forge tales of rescuing lands overrun with Orcs and defending their turf from invading players," said Rob Overmeyer, executive producer for Neverwinter.

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Streaming Highlights

Including the official D&D Podcast, composer Inon Zur on his Sword Coast Legends soundtrack, Art Director Dan Gelon hard at work prepping the Earth Myrmidon D&D mini and the team at Node Studios on a barbarian rampage!



D&D PODCAST

In the latest installment of the official D&D podcast, the crew had a great time chatting with Girl Scout troop leader, Gary Astleford. In addition to being a freelance writer and game designer with over three decades of tabletop roleplay gaming under his belt, Gary is a Girl Scout troop leader determined to share the benefits of TRPGs with his service unit. To that end, he has created requirements for a TRPG badge and organized a workshop for the San Diego Girl Scouts.

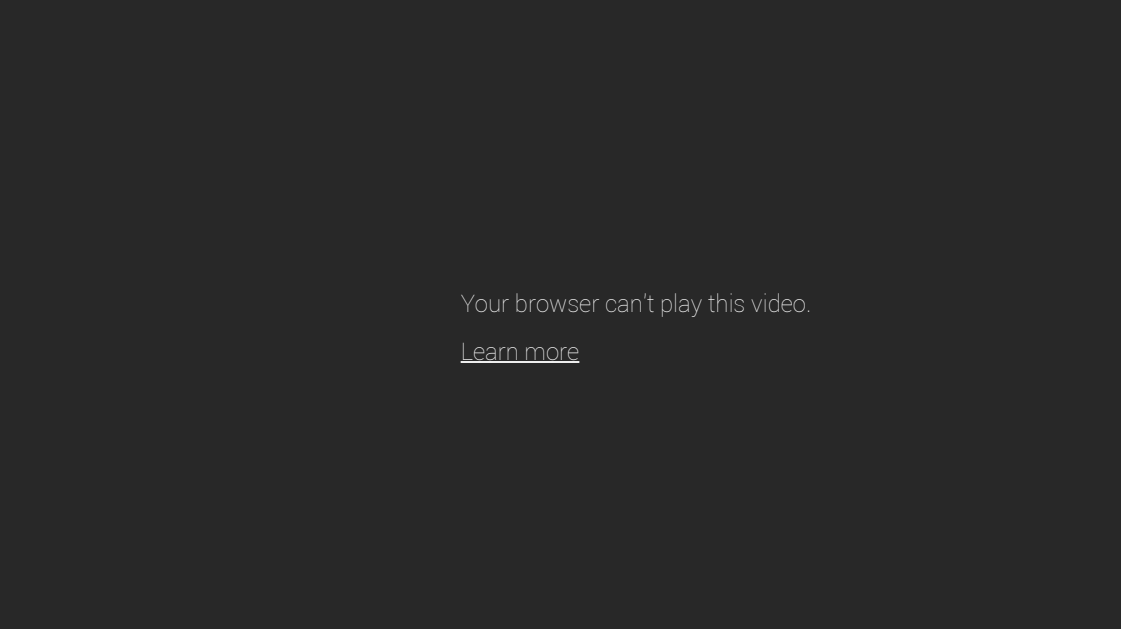


Meanwhile, Tim Schwalk and Ash Sevilla from game developer n-Space are busy plugging away on the upcoming Dungeons &

Dragons CRPG *Sword Coast Legends* and were eager to reveal a few of their favorite features, as well as their plans for the world’s biggest gaming event, E3.

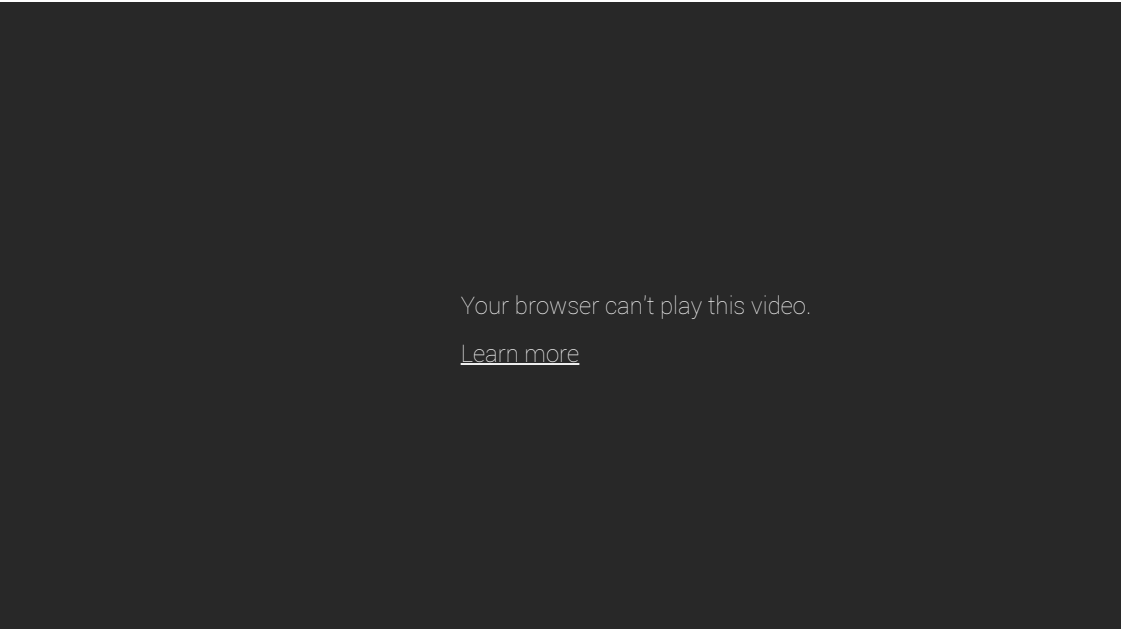
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NEVERWINTER: STRONGHOLD



On page seven of this issue of Dragon+ we stoke the excitement for the upcoming *Neverwinter: Strongholds* MMORPG expansion. For the best results, read those five essential facts about the update to the sound of all the roaring, slashing and galloping they’ve packed into this teaser video.

INON ZUR



The audio treats don’t stop with the official D&D podcast and the epic sounds (and sights) of *Neverwinter: Strongholds*. Watch and listen as *Sword Coast Legends* composer Inon Zur discusses his writing process, as his rousing videogame score sweeps over his

words.

MYRMIDON MASTERPIECES

“In celebration of the Elemental Evil storyline, I’ve been given the opportunity to paint Gale Force Nine’s four elemental myrmidons,” says Daniel Gelon, Dungeons & Dragons Digital Art Director at Wizards of the Coast, as he explains his process to *Dragon*+...

Your browser can't play this video.

[Learn more](#)

THE MINIATURES

“Myrmidons are heavily armored elementals and there is one miniature each representing earth, air, water and fire, for a total of four miniatures. They are based on illustrations by Filip Burburan that I art directed and appear in the *Princes of the Apocalypse* tabletop adventure. The miniatures are very close to the original illustrations and are large, each of them around three and a half inches tall. Each is beautifully sculpted and they are cast in resin and came to me in multiple parts.”

THE PAINTING

“I’m going to be sharing a series of time-lapse movies and articles (including lots of pictures) describing what I’m doing in the videos. I’ll be taking around three weeks (three movies, three articles) for each of the miniatures until they are all finished. I’ve been painting miniatures for as long as I’ve been playing D&D, which amounts to decades. As I paint, I will be keeping the colors pretty close to the original illustrations and using a variety of different techniques every week.

“I am a hobbyist painter; I feel I’m pretty good but nowhere near competition level, so the techniques I’ll be using should be pretty easy to follow for your own painting endeavors. That said, the first week begins with the earth myrmidon, where I’ll show you how to get a bunch of parts turned into a miniature that is ready to be painted.”

CALL OF THE WILD

Node Studios creates all kinds of gaming-related videos on YouTube, from fun Airsoft battles in their Los Angeles studio to the gang fragging each other in multiplayer LAN parties. This year, Sam, Niko, Brandon and D have embraced their inner fantasy and begun playing in a homebrew D&D campaign they've dubbed Call of the Wild. Serving as Dungeon Master, Sam takes the three adventurers through a morally complex journey of barbarians fighting for survival against encroaching civilization. Multiple high-definition cameras capture the banter around the table between friends, as well as the dramatic battles depicted using scenery from Dwarven Forge and miniatures from WizKids.

And now a word from our lawyers... content found on Node Studios YouTube channel may be of a more mature subject matter and does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Wizards. With that, enjoy 'Call of the Wild'.

[WATCH NOW](#)

SWORD COAST LEGENDS



Ready your weapons, grab your armor, and gather your party! *Sword Coast Legends* is coming to PC, Mac, Linux, Xbox One and PlayStation 4 later this year. This new trailer of the hotly anticipated RPG shows off a taste of the adventure, combat, companions and real-time DM mode.

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Short Fiction by CHRIS AVELLONE

Chris wrote this short story while working at Black Isle on the Icewind Dale video game.

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Tiernon's boots crunched through the snow, his legs sinking to the hip with every step. Even bolstered by the magic of a *giant-kin belt*, the dwarf could barely struggle forward with the iron chest balanced on his shoulders.

He spat curses as he forged through the snow. Curses kept him warm.

The chest strapped to Tiernon's back was a crude, soot-black box. Secured by chains barely a finger's width thick, the chest was easily twice the dwarf's size. Frost-tinged shields, hammers, and axes dangled from its sides, rattling against the chest as Tiernon trudged steadily onward.

Everything around him was white. The great ice plain of the North fell beneath his feet step by step, and the snowy air swirled around him. Even with the wind whipping his face, Tiernon's eyes remained fixed ahead, to where a thin black line cut across the vast whiteness.

This black horizon was what called to Tiernon.

The barbarians told him it was a great glacier, a sacred place that had suffered the pains of the world. They said it was where the earth had given birth to the sun, scorching the land for miles around as the newborn star had burst into the sky.

Those same barbarians shunned the place. They spoke of elk herds that sickened and died after passing through the glacier's shadow, slain by the earth-mother's lingering birth pains.

Tiernon asked for the glacier's name. They told him: the Gloomfrost.



The call had begun as a murmur in Tiernon's head, a nagging voice that whispered he had forgotten something. As it grew stronger, Tiernon began pausing in his labors to check his tool belt or glance around for the hammer he already held in his hands. His behavior worried his two apprentices, who feared Tiernon's age had finally dealt him a hammer blow from which he would never recover.

They did not dare voice their fears to their master. They did not have to, for Tiernon shared their concern. He became even more short-tempered every time he roused himself from standing frozen at the forge, lost in thought.

Tiernon had heard of other dwarven smiths who had felt the call, and he knew it took different forms. Some had heard it as they set raw iron upon the anvil. Others were said to have felt it stir in the rock, like a steady heartbeat within the earth. For Tiernon the call had come like a mother's persistent reprimands.

Whatever its form, the call was a summons, a call to the greatest of dwarven smiths that the time of their masterwork was upon them. The priests said the call was the voice of Moradin, the greatest of the dwarven gods, challenging his people to prove themselves. Others claimed the call was not a god's voice but the earth itself, calling out to the dwarves to plumb its secrets.

No matter the source, those who answered it would make the finest work of their lives. At the end of their ultimate labor, they would have created a weapon that could write its own legend, one before which all other weapons would seem crude.

When he realized what the murmur must be, Tiernon followed it eagerly. It led him north, where the land was ice. It led him deeper, through the windswept snow. It led him to where the black horizon cut through the white land and sky.



Tiernon climbed, a pick in each hand, grunting with every swing of the picks. The grunting was out of necessity, not exertion.

With a word from Tiernon, the heads of the picks blazed, and he plunged them into the glacier wall, the ice melting to water from the heat. With another grunted word, the picks froze the water around the

impact to ice once again, rooting the pick in place.

And so he climbed, grunted commands and swinging picks working together to carve a path upwards, until he reached a jutting ledge. Locking the picks in place, he heaved himself up and over onto the flat sheet of ice.

Tiernon had kept to himself for much of the journey; thanks to his icy, monochromatic surroundings, he did not realize that of late, he could no longer see as well as he did before. And so it was that he missed the two great forms already squatting on the ledge. The white-skinned giants stared as the elderly dwarf with the chest twice his size chained to his back shuffled onto the ledge.

One of the giants, the larger of the two, wore a patchwork of polar bear skins, and his beard was braided with the bones of humans, bears, and elk. The bones rattled as he turned his gaze upon the dwarf, and it was this noise that made Tiernon turn.

The giants and the dwarf regarded each other for a heartbeat, neither one moving.

The giants were not the largest of their kind that Tiernon had seen. They looked to be hunters, but they seemed gaunt, as if their hunting had met with little luck. Their furs were wrapped loosely around them, and they had not yet gathered up their great clubs. Tiernon was suddenly conscious of the picks he had left locked on the edge of the cliff.

When Tiernon saw the giants' surprise give way to anger, he acted.

He shrugged the chains from his back and let the chest tumble onto the ledge. As the two giants grabbed their clubs and rose to their feet, Tiernon fumbled for a huge hammer hanging from the side of the chest, and the first shield he could latch onto. By the time he had both, the smaller of the two giants was thundering toward him.

Tiernon barely had time to raise his shield in a clumsy block as the giant's club swung low. With a sound like the tolling of an old church bell, Tiernon flew into the air, slamming into the ground with a heavy thud.

Ignoring the stabbing pains in his back, Tiernon staggered to his feet as the smaller giant circled him, smiling with a half-row of yellowed teeth. Tiernon risked a glance at the now-dented shield hanging limply in his grip, then grunted and cast it away.

His right hand freed of the shield, Tiernon gripped the huge hammer in his left more tightly. He rumbled out a quick hymn to Moradin, and suddenly there were two hammers, a twin for his right hand. As the giant paused at the second hammer's sudden appearance, Tiernon let the first fly, giving the haft a vicious spin as it left his grip. The hammer flew like a skipping stone along the ledge, creating ripples of cracked ice with each impact, circling around the giant and back to Tiernon.

A breath before the hammer completed its circle, Tiernon smashed the other hammer onto the ledge, and a crash of thunder rolled outwards. The vibrations rippled through the ground, and the ice beneath the giant's feet splintered and fell away, the giant roaring as he plunged into the hole left by the hammer's wake.

Tiernon caught the first hammer as it finished its path, and secured his grip on both of them. He turned to the remaining giant, who was staring at the huge hole where his fellow had stood a moment ago. The bones woven in his beard rattled again as he turned back to look at the dwarf. By then, Tiernon had already let the second hammer fly.

The giant's head cratered, the hammer plowing through his skull. The headless body swayed for a moment, then slumped to its knees and fell forward, blood running from the ruined mass of the neck.

Tiernon stood for a moment, breathing heavily, then frowned.

He hadn't been in the mood for killing giants.

He hiked his belt up around his waist, and with a grunt, heaved the chest back upon his shoulders. He pulled his two picks from the ledge and glanced up at the climb that remained. Not long after, his grunts and the sound of the swinging picks began again.



Tiernon had thought the exterior of the glacier was huge; the interior seemed even larger. The view inside stole his breath for several heartbeats.

Great spears of ice blossomed around him, from the walls, the ground, the ceiling – everywhere he looked was ice. The smoky glass walls flowed in rivers of blue and black and were canted at strange angles, each plane catching and splitting Tiernon's image into a dozen, a score, a hundred pieces, each fragment staring at the heart of the Gloomfrost in wonder.

The call was all around him now. He felt a sense of reverence among the pillars of ice and the strange blue-black walls of the glacier, and the call became a chorus around him, each pillar adding its voice to the others. He felt as if he had stepped into a cathedral of black glass.

This place, at the edge of the world, would serve as his forge.

The hundred pieces of Tiernon stared in their separate directions, lost in the call.



Tiernon's exploration of the glacier quickly proved frustrating. Every chamber within the Gloomfrost looked the same, and Tiernon retraced his steps repeatedly as he walked the black-mirrored corridors. Some of the ceilings were so low that Tiernon could brush them with his fingertips; other passages were nothing more than

cracks in the ice his thick frame could barely squeeze through.

As he descended deeper into the heart of the glacier, these jagged narrow passages opened up into great snaking halls, with ceilings five or six times his height. The walls were smooth, polished, as if a molten river had once flowed through the body of the glacier and left these great passages in its wake.

Tiernon had barely stepped into the first of these larger halls, his gaze locked on studying the ceilings and walls, when he felt the *crunch* beneath his foot. He froze, glanced down.

His boot was buried in the shattered remains of a polar worm egg... one of many that were nestled together, all of them hatched and hollow.

Tiernon's gaze traveled the length of the corridor, and he saw another nest... and another... the corridor's gently sloping floor was a cobbled road of egg clusters, some clumped within the snow, their tips barely showing, others huddled against the walls like frightened children. Some were no larger than the size of his fist, some were the size of boulders – he could have crawled inside one of them if he had wanted to. All the shells were cracked, tiny pieces littering the snow around them.

Tiernon chewed his beard in thought. He hadn't seen a single polar worm in all the time he had been in the glacier.

He glanced again at the walls, noticed the absence of angles.

Something had tunneled through this section of the glacier and had left the curved, glassy surface behind. His gaze traveled up to the ceiling, cresting twenty feet above him.

He turned his thoughts from exploration to shelter.



He had heard tales of the remorhaz, the great polar worms that burrowed beneath the ice and tundra in Icedale. The barbarians had told him the worms hunted by burying themselves beneath the snow, only to erupt when they felt a creature come close. They told him wild stories about the worms – that their flesh burned so hot that the shafts of spears and axes burst into flame when striking them, and that the worms' appetites were such that they could swallow an entire camp whole. The barbarians joked that Tiernon's stumpy legs would do little to aid him if he should chance to step upon one in his travels.

"If they be thinking to swallow me," Tiernon had grunted, countering their jests, "they'll find me a tougher meal than some thin-blooded giant." He had come prepared, and tapped the great iron chest he carried for emphasis.

The barbarians had bellowed at this, laughing and shaking their heads. But one of them had not. An old warrior with a fierce gaze had

suddenly stood, then spat on the ground at Tiernon's feet.

“Boasting may keep you warm, half-man, but if you're thinking words will make you lord of the Gloomfrost, know it already has a ruler.” The old warrior sneered, his lips scarred, his beard dotted with frost and ice. “Go too far north into the Gloomfrost's shadow, and you'll find out what happened to the frost giants, why none have been seen in the southern tundra this past season.”

The gazes of the barbarians around the circle darkened at this, and their laughter had died.



As he stared across the great floor of shattered eggs, Tiernon felt a deeper chill take a hold of him.

It occurred to Tiernon he didn't know what the frost giants he'd killed had been hunting. There were no elk, no wildlife, no wolves... and no polar worms. It seemed a far way for the giants to travel to hunt nothing; perhaps they had exhausted the glacier's hunting grounds and had killed all the remorhaz within.

He nudged one of the hatched eggs with his pick. The shell had a curious whitish tinge with blue accents; he tapped it, testing its strength. It gave a strange metallic ring. Tiernon frowned.

A second strike with the pick, and the corridor erupted.

Tiernon's heart thundered in sudden panic as the floor... a great shadow within the floor... *moved*. Blood raced through his body, his arms, demanding he *move*, he *act*, he *strike, anything*, or he would die.

Tiernon swung down again, past the egg, through the ice, and into the rolling shadow beneath, and he felt the pick ring again, glancing off the hide of the great beast. A wave of heat poured from the rippling opening, and the huge mass beneath the floor arched upwards, the floor pitching forward in a great wave of ice as a great hissing of steam and vapor rose around the surfacing creature. Tiernon tried to brace himself, but there was no place to stand, and his legs twisted, dropping him to his knees as the creature erupted from the floor. Its back ran almost the entire length of the corridor, the shattered eggs embedded in its hide like pebbles.

It was a hideous mash of insect, dragon... fish... its scores of chitinous legs clicked like a rain of swords against the icy floor. Steam rushed from the melting floor, and the walls of the corridor began to bead up, turning to water from the waves of heat pulsing from the creature's body. It felt like the sun itself had dawned in the corridor.

Through the steam and heat, he caught a glimpse of great crystalline eyes, like huge diamonds set into its skull, and the great finned crown that flared up from the flanges of its neck – it was *huge*, too huge to

take in with the eyes, and Tiernon half-stumbled, half-crawled backwards as the huge bluish-white wall rose in front of his vision.

He struck again, desperate, a child's swing, and the pick glanced off the thing's hide, and then again – nothing, no wound, and then the heat was suddenly too much to bear. This was not a battle he could win.

Tiernon ran, ran, his cold, cramped legs knotting with the effort as he dashed down the corridor, desperately looking for a place to hide, a side branch, anything to flee down that would cause the beast to falter. Ice shattered behind him as the creature's head brushed the top of the corridor, snaking around to follow the dwarf's flight.

Tiernon ran for what felt like a league, sprinting, trying to hug the walls, running to the left and right with sharp turns in the hopes of confusing the creature.

Barely a few moments into his flight, he suddenly found himself pulled by instinct, causing him to dodge to the left and into a side crevice, one he hadn't seen in his initial survey of the corridor.

Panicking, praying to any dwarven gods who would listen, he twisted inside, fighting his way as deep into the constricting passage as his body would go, his lungs pounding and his breath coming in heavy bursts. The dead black of the crevice walls enveloped him like swirling smoke clouds, steam hissing from the side corridor as the *thing* flowed by, a wave of cracking and splintering as the ice fractured beneath it, hearing him, sensing his movements, its head lashing into the crevice to seize him...

...but it could not reach him.

The black ice edges the crevice, the blackest core, would not melt or break, even in the presence of such heat and strength. The beast screeched, smashing itself against the crevice walls, but Tiernon was far from its fangs... safe.

He was safe. He couldn't believe it.

A distant part of him stared, hypnotized as the beast a hundred times his own weight thundered against the walls of his hiding place, trying to get at him. If he had been a few moments too late, a year or two older and slower, he would have been swimming within the flames of the creature's stomach.

He fought his way backward through the crevice, barely able to turn his head from the monstrosity to see where he was heading. He crawled and stumbled, fighting his way step by step, until the screeching and hissing of the great beast receded.

Countless hours later, the walls began to widen, and Tiernon squeezed from the crevice. He took one step, then another, then collapsed to the ground. His heartbeat hammered in his chest so hard he was worried its drumbeat would somehow give him away.

His only thought as his vision went black was that next time he would pay more heed to barbarian tales.



He awoke after a timeless darkness. His first thought, and to calm himself: shelter. Defense. Make walls. Burrow down.

Yet even the simplest shelter proved more difficult than Tiernon thought.

Trusting that the darkest, densest pools of ice would serve as walls against the creature's attacks, he set to work looking for a defensible site. It didn't take long – the area the crevice had deposited him ran thick with the black ice. Choosing a suitable pocket, he used his remaining pick to burrow deep within it, carving out a shell large enough to keep him safe.

When he finished, half-numb with cold and exhaustion, Tiernon fell upon the floor and caught his breath. As the chamber became silent of all except his breathing, Tiernon suddenly noticed the call, lost beneath his pounding heartbeat and brush with death, had gotten louder... stronger somehow.

Guarded on all sides by the walls of black ice, he suddenly realized what had been calling to him.

Tiernon stood, then began a slow circuit of the chamber, tracing the scorched paths of ice with his fingers. The black ice within the chamber... the black ice of the crevice; it hadn't been chance that had pulled him from the creature's jaws and led him here. He chuckled softly.

The ice was calling out to be shaped.



There was no way out of the glacier that did not go through the creature's egg chamber, Tiernon discovered. His scouting expeditions were confined to the passages of black ice where he had made his home – a dark knot at the heart of the Gloomfrost, beyond which the beast hunted freely. He became sensitive to tremors and sounds, real or imagined, and he had to fight off his racing panic as he explored the glacier, looking for an alternate route to the surface.

Nothing.

Tiernon did not have much in the way of supplies – he had dropped most of his equipment within the egg chamber as he had fled, and he couldn't risk going back for it. His legs might not carry him as far or fast enough as they had last time, and he knew he could not outrun the creature.

And his pick had been useless. Even with his giant-kin belt bolstering his strength, the pick had merely glanced off the creature's hide. He held the metal in his hands, examining the head of the pick, trying to

see if the heat from the creature had harmed it. The head still looked intact. Despite its use as a climbing tool, the enchantment upon the pick was strong, the equal of many of his other weapons. If it had not harmed the beast, then he doubted his other weapons would prove any more effective... and he was certain he could manage only one strike, perhaps two, before the beast would be upon him.

He returned to his chamber and huddled against the wall. The urge to run, to flee the Gloomfrost, fought against his fear of the creature that waited for him. Escape and oblivion pulled at his thoughts, splitting them into two directions, but both led to the same place. He would die here.

A chill burrowed into Tiernon's bones, driven deeper by his pangs of hunger. He had come all this way, and it had all been for naught.

The beast had already won.



Eventually, sleep claimed Tiernon. And with it, the tides of the call seemed to form themselves into words, the black ice a voice like crystal.

Awaken, child of the elder races.

Tiernon floated within a great sphere of blackness, his equipment gone, his weapons gone. His terror was a naked thing, stemming from the edged words that sliced from the darkness around him.

You have come too far to surrender now. We have waited a long time for you, Tiernon.

You must do battle here, now, or your life's work shall never be complete.

Tiernon's lips struggled to protest, to find words.

"I cannot. No weapon can harm the beast—"

You have forged the Many-Toothed Maul, which cracked the great wall of the Keep of Aengys Soothammer and silenced the boasting of his engineers and architects. Upon the maul's twin faces you sowed the teeth of stone giants, planting them into metal chipped from the copper-veined walls of your home in the Sunset Mountains and forged in a fire fueled by the last hundred trees of Ored's Wood, all of which you felled in a day with a great double-bladed axe.

To help a youth, the last hope of a frightened people, you crafted the Singing Blade of Aihonen. In this blade you placed the dying breath of his broken-hearted mother, then gave it to him to give the boy strength in his battle against the last of the dragon matriarchs of the Spine of the World.

You armed the Nine Beards, the cursed axemen of the Hearthstone Clan, who took up your weapons knowing that wielding them would

kill them as surely as their enemies. In each weapon you had caged a fury of nature. One of the Nine held a hammer that screamed as a whirlwind. Another held an axe that glowed like magma and spit lava and hot ash upon anyone in its path. One wielded a spear that could wound the sky and turn the rain to acid. Each a mighty weapon – so mighty that the Nine were willing to give their lives so that your weapons might bring salvation to your people.

There was a silence within the darkness, and Tiernon found himself frozen, paralyzed, each word sinking like a fang through his flesh.

You are the greatest weaponsmith of your kind. There is nothing you cannot make and sunder and make and break again, until the great mother and all her metals and stones bow to your will.

You must learn to find your way in the darkness, or you are lost. If you die here, all the North will die with you.

You must face the Winter King.



The dream left him, but the words echoed in his skull, striking like hammers in his head.

As Tiernon awoke in the darkness, it seemed as if the whole chamber had come to life, watching him like an audience. He could feel eyes – and see them, in his mind. But more terrible than anything, he still felt the call of the black ice, and he was unable to answer. Rather than slip away into silence, the call instead became louder, more insistent.

“Leave me be,” he hissed. “There’s nothing to be done.”



Tiernon, in all his life, had never been idle. It was a new experience for him. And so it was that time stretched out before him, and he sat. And thought. The flurry of thoughts and tasks and days fell and became still, and his black days became sensations of cold and wind and hunger.

He was starving to death. His skin was becoming slack, his body devouring itself slowly, piece by piece. His strength ebbed, and he was forced to stop his explorations of the cave; there was no way out except through the beast, and that was a road he would not take.

The pangs that thudded in his gullet were overshadowed by the image of the Winter King’s great, razored fangs, gnashing against the crevice, desperate to reach him.

It had been hungry as well. Perhaps hungrier than he was.

He didn’t know how long it had been since it had fed last. It had been so hungry it had cannibalized its own young... maybe its mate as well. Judging from what he had seen on the floor of the egg-strewn corridor, the Winter King had not even waited for them to emerge

from their shells before devouring them.

From hunger, a slow idea began to shape itself in his mind.



Tiernon took up his pick and with a grunted word, began to use its great heat to chisel away at the walls of his prison. The ice was stubborn, and he was only able to chip away small fragments at a time. It was enough.

The pile of shards in his chamber grew. When the pile was his height and width, Tiernon began to lay the fragments across the floor, like a craftsman setting a mosaic inlay for a throne room. The fragments blended curiously with the grayish black of the chamber, and the reflections cast by the splinters made the walls and ceiling seem blanketed with fragments as well.

When the floor was tiled in a thin layer of black shards, Tiernon began weeding through them, choosing a piece, tossing another, and dividing the fragments into smaller and smaller piles. He drifted off several times in the process, only to jerk awake and begin the process again, his hands fumbling for new fragments to appraise.

When only a lone pile remained, he took up his pick again.

His hands unsteady from hunger, he began to work the shards, slowly and awkwardly at first, then with greater precision and skill as his hands and mind warmed to the task.




Tiernon worked, his rhythm growing to fervor, laboring hours past his body's cries for rest. His pick stopped carving only when the last piece was shaped and pile of shards was no more.

He took the final piece of ice in his hands and felt its edge, turning it to get a feel for its dimensions and weight, then used his super-heated pick to chip at its edges, circling it with small notches until it resembled a piece of a child's lock-puzzle.

When he was satisfied, the shaped fragment was connected to the growing blanket of linked ice plates before him. After a time, the blanket came to resemble a scale mail cloak, its brim so wide it looked like it could encircle Tiernon twice over. When the last piece had *clicked* into place, Tiernon peeled the ice-shelled cloak from the floor and drew it about him.

He fitted it across his shoulders, once, twice, then three times, then tested it, swinging its ends outward and then jerking them in sharply. The razor-sharp edges of the cloak rippled at this, then came together, the notched ice pieces clicking into place like teeth, every edge locking together to create a mailed sphere around the dwarf.

Sealed within the chilly circle of the cloak, Tiernon could not help but smile at the coffin he had constructed for himself.



Tiernon knew he had to act soon. His plan required that his mind be sharp and his reflexes sharper, and hunger took a greater toll on his body the longer he remained a prisoner. Gathering his resolve, he left his chamber, prepared for battle.

He returned to the nesting corridor and unrolled the cloak, slowly and carefully so as not to make a sound. He draped it loosely about his shoulders, then gripped his enchanted pick in his left hand.

“Damn me,” Tiernon whispered to himself. “More fool, I.”

With a trembling breath, Tiernon began to tap, slowly and steadily on the icy floor, the pick making a ringing noise within the vault of the Gloomfrost, calling the Winter King to battle.

The walls rippled from the sudden burst of heat and rage as the great worm arched in on the sound of the pick, its ravenous mind seeking the tremors that would lead it to Tiernon.



By the third ring, the Winter King was upon him.

It *flowed* into the egg-strewn corridor, shell fragments and ice spinning around the chamber in its wake. As he again felt the heat emanating from the creature’s hide, Tiernon whipped the ice-shelled cloak out and around his squat frame, the edges latching together like dozens of locks to form a black icy sphere around Tiernon.

He was blind, a dwarf encased in ice. He could not move, could not see, and he clutched his pick tightly in his hand. It was his reserve weapon. If it proved useless, then his new home was in the Winter King’s belly, and nothing could save him.

The Winter King knew that within the shell lay the dwarf. It lashed downwards, its fangs extended to pierce the dwarven-made egg. There was a tearing shudder, and Tiernon’s stomach lurched as his sphere was lifted off the ground by the Winter King’s jaws, and there was another jerking motion as the creature tilted its head back, forced the egg into its jaws, swallowing it, smashing at it with its fangs.

A wave of heat from the creature’s gut could be felt even through the icy shell that surrounded Tiernon, and Tiernon winced as the shocks and growing heat jolted through his cloak of mail, and he prayed for it to hold.

The Winter King’s jaws snapped down, and the screeching of the Winter King nearly deafened him.

The mail’s curved shell was reinforced against itself – the plates of jagged black ice were interlocked so that when it was wrapped around the wearer, it would remain fast. For anything that swallowed it, it would be akin to chewing a stone... or a diamond.

Tiernon heard the cracking as the Winter King's fangs buckled against the icy-plated sphere, the teeth snapping like icicles, and the screeching grew to a keening. Its jaws drew back, the fangs gone or retracted, and Tiernon felt the pressure around his makeshift armor ease, a respite.

It was his moment to strike.

Tiernon hunkered down within the shell like a quilled fish curling into a ball, then flung his arms outward, the cloak unfurling within the Winter King's mouth.

There was a swarm of clicking, like beetles, as the edges of the cloak split apart, the notched edges suddenly bright and sharp. The flanged edges of the cloak swept outward with a rattling sound and the now-bladed cloak locked into its new shape, an icy caltrop within the Winter King's mouth. Where once was armor, now was a weapon.

Tiernon let the carefully honed edges of the cloak sow death, the daggers of black ice raking the soft inner flesh of the creature's throat, carving wounds that a dwarf, no matter what his speed or strength, could have hoped against the massive, heated hide of the Winter King.

He gripped his pick tightly as the heat and acid from the beast's stomach began to pour into the cavity left by the cloak.

He had known going in he could not fight a hero's fight and expect to survive. The Winter King was too big, too fast, its hide impervious to his attacks.

Tiernon let his panic claim him. Pick still in hand, he lashed out as the Winter King buckled and thrashed, trying to loosen the bladed egg from its mouth. Tiernon let his pick hammer out its rhythm of death, hacking and tearing at the creature from within, and every blow struck true, striking deep into its soft portions, the hollows of its throat, the membranes that arched across the roof of its maw, tearing chunks from its throat and skull as if he was mining it from within.

He let all the rage at his imprisonment, his skill, his fear, his near-surrender fuel every swing of the pick, but it was hopeless. It was like he was trying to batter down a living, breathing castle with his bare hands. Still, he gripped his pick tighter and raised it above his head.

As the creature's fiery insides washed over him, he sunk the enchanted pick deep into its rushing blood and bellowed out a final, desperate command. There was a rushing wind, the crackling of ice, and the dwarven smith knew no more.



He awoke.

His skin felt crusted, raw, but there was no pain. He knew he lay within the egg chamber, but he did not know how he had got there.

Around him were fragments of ice, colored black, and chunks, pieces of white, blue and great tracts of frozen flesh... the body of the Winter King, its fiery blood turned to ice when Tiernon had given his enchanted pick its final command. The creature had fallen, shattered, and aside from a few chunks of ice that still clung to his tattered boots and leggings, Tiernon felt nothing broken, no great marks on his flesh. The icy cloak had done more than its craftsman had hoped and shielded him from the worst of the steaming blood.

He had not expected to survive; his ploy with the cloak and pick had been one of desperation.

Yet he had triumphed.

He let a smug smile cross his face.

Tiernon lay there for what felt like hours, letting the feeling slowly return to his bones and joints, and savored his victory. There was a song or two in this, of that he was sure.

The call had demanded he shape ice, and so he had.

Around him, the black ice of the Gloomfrost drummed out its steady rhythm.

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Interview: Fantasy Grounds

DOUG DAVISON was so impressed with the virtual tabletop RPG software Fantasy Grounds that he bought the company. With fifth edition D&D rules now included, he showcases a tool that helps you play online and speed up your offline gameplay.

Matt Chapman

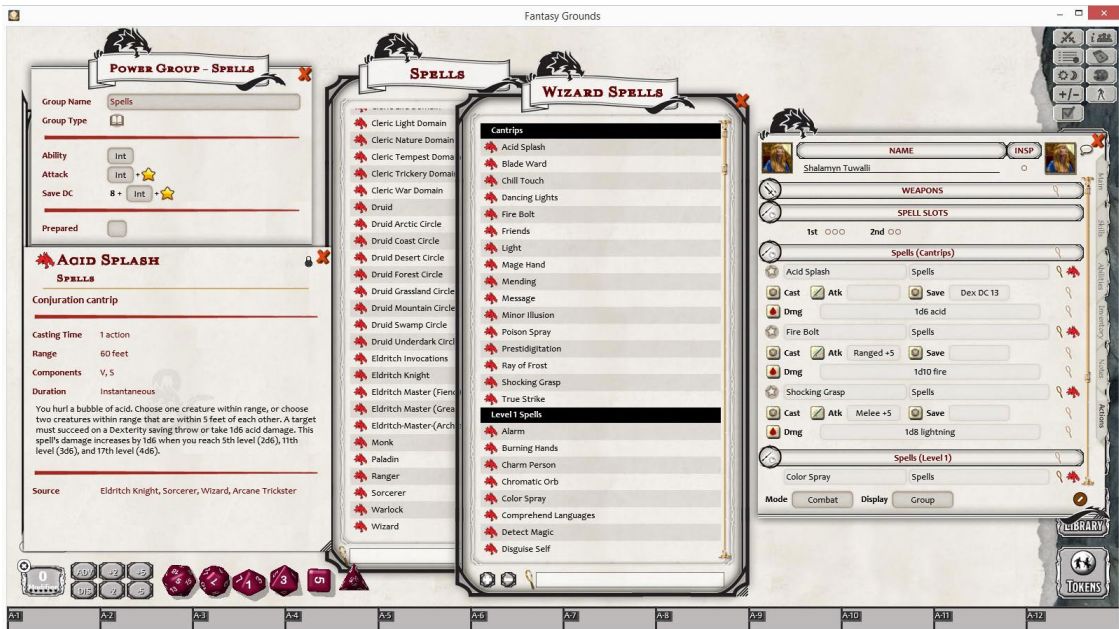
In 2008 Doug Davison was moving from one US state to another and was waving goodbye to his gaming group. Rather than leave them behind and move on, he began actively looking for programs and tools that would allow that group of friends to keep playing remotely.



DOUG

“*Fantasy Grounds* jumped out at me as a really good option for that,” he remembers. “At that point in time it only supported Dungeons & Dragons third edition rules and it was starting to expand a little bit but no-one within the company seemed to be officially driving that change.”

“I used it for a while and built my own rule set, so we could play *Star Wars Saga Edition*. I really liked how extensible and well thought out the product was, and how you could manipulate it and build your own stuff within the system.”



(Select to view)



(Select to view)

At that time, Davison was in the process of selling another company he’d run for eight years and was looking to do something different. The basic core framework of *Fantasy Grounds* was built by three men in Finland back in 2004 and as an end user who liked manipulating the software, he wondered if he could take it further.

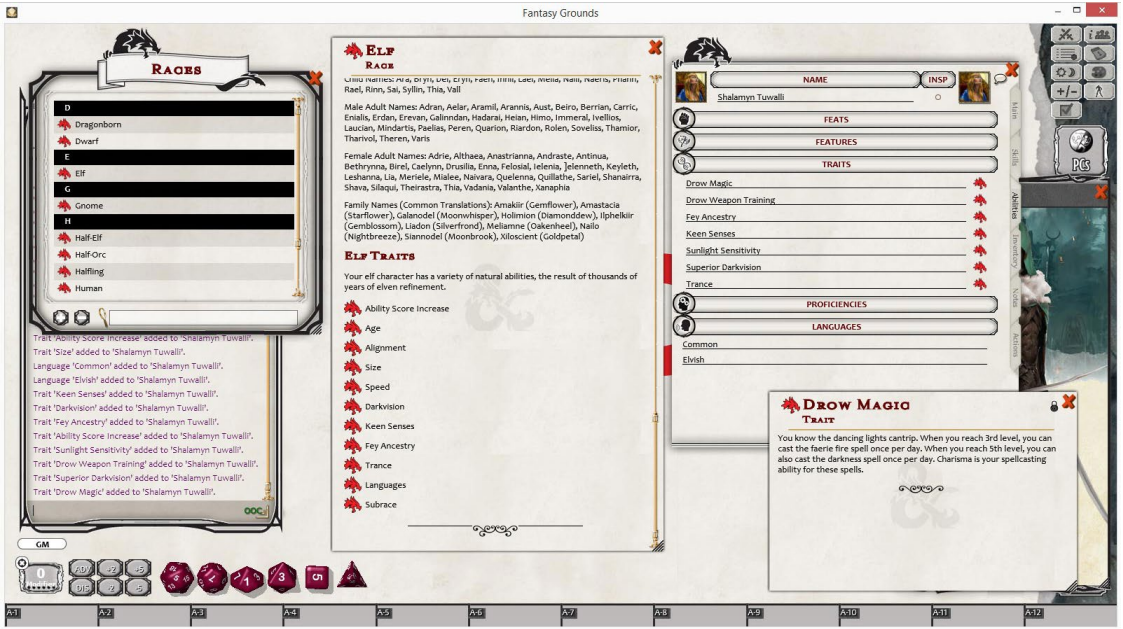
“Being a programmer and a geek [laughs] who liked RPG games it was the perfect fit. This was only a hobby product of mine but I reached out to those guys and asked if they’d be interested in selling the company, because I saw more opportunity for it than they were really capitalizing on,” Davison recalls.

“By the third quarter of 2009 the purchase went through and the following year I brought in another person who was similar to me – a community developer who had built a D&D fourth edition rule set for *Fantasy Grounds*. His name’s John Gregory and he’s the co-owner.”

Fitting for a company that connects players who may not be in the same room – or even the same country – the pair had never actually met in person before they came together to work on *Fantasy Grounds*. All of their interactions prior to that deal had taken place completely online. “I’ve formed gaming groups with people I’ve never met in person and the play experience is very similar to the

local groups where people just gathered and played,” Davison says proudly of his product.

VIEW GALLERY



Doug Davison is keen to stress that Fantasy Grounds, “is not a full-blown character builder, although we are adding more and more features and we will continue to enhance that over time.” However, it is very easy to build characters using the same drag-and-drop mechanic most other Fantasy Grounds features use. Much of the heavy lifting is then done for you automatically. For example, when you choose a race, the software adds all of the different modifiers and sets options such as your languages and basic traits.

Fast forward to today and *Fantasy Grounds* has rolled out a whole range of new updates and enhancements and has partnered with a number of different RPGs and publishing companies to officially use their content. Whereas Dungeons & Dragons had always proved “elusive ” in the past, Davison finally secured a deal for fifth edition. “For me that’s one of my major accomplishments and I can check that off the bucket list,” he states proudly.

Having integrated fifth edition into *Fantasy Grounds*, players can buy whole books or individual packs of content as additional purchases. For example, instead of buying the full *Player’s Handbook*, which contains everything in that guide, if a player is only running a sorcerer in a single campaign, they can simply get the Sorcerer Pack at a much lower cost. It’s the same with the *Monster Manual*, which is available as one huge module or as smaller packs – say, *Aberrations*, *Beasts* or *Fiends*, to make it easier to buy at a lower cost.

Books can be shared between player groups so they only need to be purchased once. If a player asks for access to a book or module in the DM’s library, the software asks the DM if he wants to grant that request and it goes into their library system if he allows access.

As well as being able to see and read all of the stats, descriptions, spells, abilities and images of items, characters, and creatures contained in these guides, they are also integrated right into the heart of the system. During a demonstration, Davison shows *Dragon+* how easy it is to select a creature and handle combat with a party. Initiatives can be rolled, turns tracked, attacks made and damage dished out – all virtually and with the click of a button.

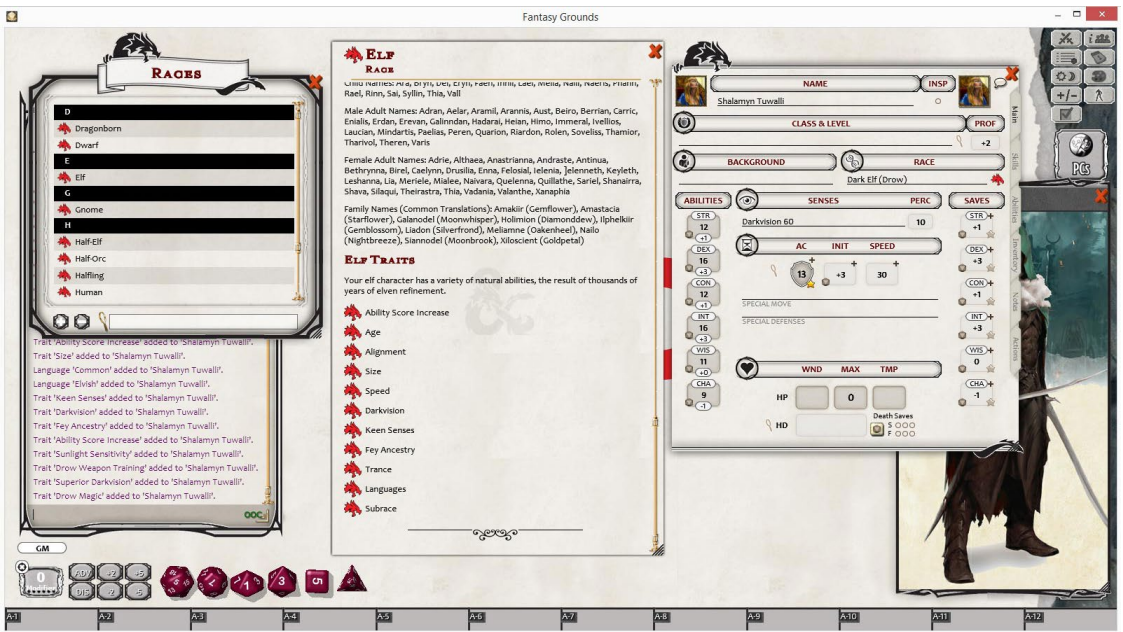
“So if I need to make a dexterity check for the creature I can just double-click the ‘Check’ button. Or I can make a saving throw by clicking on the ‘S’ and it will roll that and share the results with all the players that are connected. It’s the same with all the attacks and if it hits I can grab the damage and drop it on a player to update that player’s character sheet,” he explains.



Naturally, what the DM and the players see differs greatly. In the player view, they only see that the creature is healthy or wounded, just as they would in a real situation. They don’t see all its defenses and special abilities. Should the DM want to overrule a result for some reason, they can act as they would if they were behind a screen at the table. So where an attack misses they could say it hits and does damage to the creature, adjusting the hit points to match.



(Select to view)



(Select to view)



(Select to view)

Davison shows the difference between the DM and player versions using a map from the *Lost Mine of Phandelver*. On the former we can see secret doors, creatures and individual pushpins that link to descriptions of each room, while on the latter the only visible portion is a small area which the DM highlighted by drawing with his mouse.

As if to underline the versatility of *Fantasy Grounds*, Davison points to the way DMs use it to keep in touch with players across the internet but also to inform players who may be in the same room . “A lot of people run multiple copies on the same computer and then maybe share one of them across a projector or to a TV that’s linked up for a face-to-face game. The players can then reference that as the map,” he says. “That’s nice because then the DM can look at all of the various things they have set up for campaign management and what PCs have they met already and can track that in each of these different sections and even share stuff with individual players as well.”

[Learn more about Fantasy Grounds online](#)

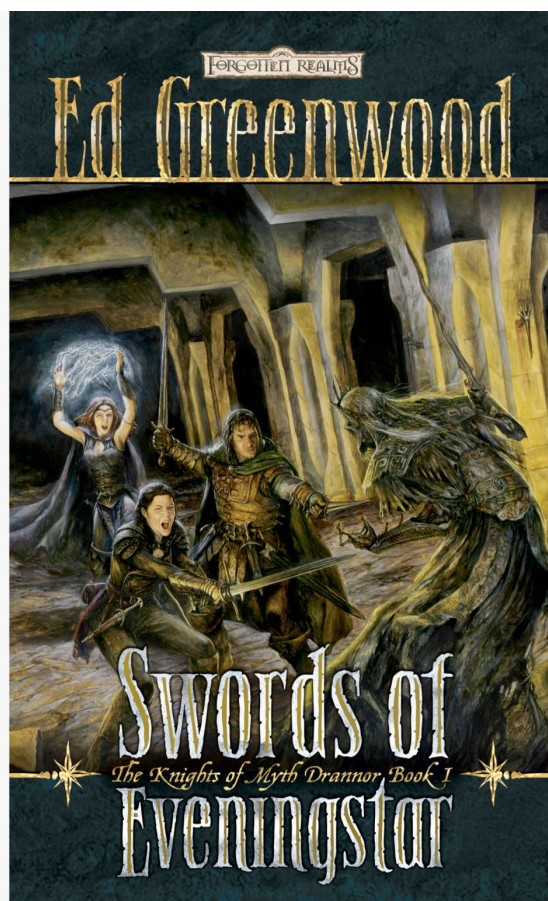
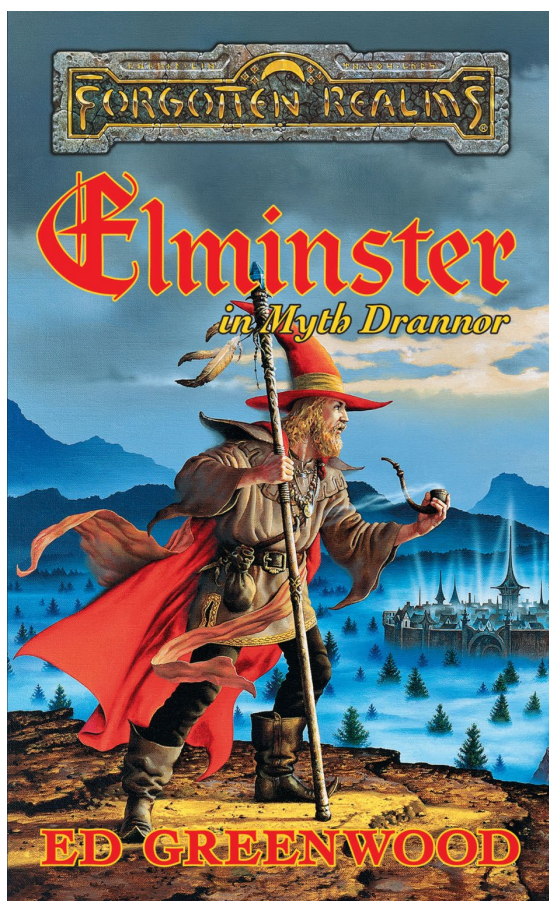
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Interview: Ed Greenwood

Fantasy author ED GREENWOOD amazingly created the Forgotten Realms setting a decade before Dungeons & Dragons even existed. Still crafting a lush and vibrant universe today, his latest book *Spellstorm* is filled with the same level of detail as his early works.

Most four-year-olds would be content to see their artistic outpourings make it to the fridge door. Not Ed Greenwood. His early writings at that age were the beginnings of one of the richest fantasy worlds ever imagined. “I created the Forgotten Realms when I was very young – starting when I was four years old with bits and pieces that later found their way into it,” he remembers. “I sat down and wrote the first complete, formal Forgotten Realms story in June 1966. I turned six in July and my father distributed copies of some of my writings to his work colleagues and friends in September, so the Realms was first published in September 1966, eight years before D&D first appeared – and nine years before I first discovered the game, in 1975.”



Greenwood originally wrote purely for his own entertainment and took inspiration from material he found in his father’s den: everything from pulp magazines and wartime murder mysteries to Kipling, Dunsany, Tolkien, and Wodehouse. His early tales centered on a fat, wheezing, sly old Falstaffian rogue called Mirt the Moneylender, who swindled his way down the Sword Coast and usually ended each story fleeing a port city, one step ahead of the authorities, creditors, and rival merchants.

“I admired the way Fritz Leiber’s stories about Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser were solid tales in their own right, rather than incomplete episodes, yet they revealed a little bit more of the background setting with every story. So, in my far less talented way, I set about doing the same thing,” Greenwood explains. “And city after city, as Mirt fled, the Sword Coast grew and a year later it became ‘the Forgotten Realms.’”

LORE MASTER

He may have more than thirty Forgotten Realms novels and novellas under his belt, but Greenwood is still devoted to his world: “Crafting Realmslore is what I do. In between breathing. Every day I add lore to the Realms, because gamers and prose writers and game designers are always asking me about this or that detail of the setting. I always love adding to the game. Thus far, I’ve added over 100 monsters, thrice that number of spells, magic items galore, and various concepts and formats for presenting information, not to mention heaps of ‘everyday details’ lore. It’s still a thrill. ”

“I also keep track of a huge cast of Realms NPCs. That is, I treat Realms characters – and not just the human ones – as real people, with their own lives. I don’t mean I’m crazy and I think they’re

truly real, I mean that I think of them as if they're real and consider what they're doing 'between scenes' or even between novels. What are their careers, their aims, what do they care about and what will they fight to defend – their children, for example, or businesses they start, or causes they pursue?"

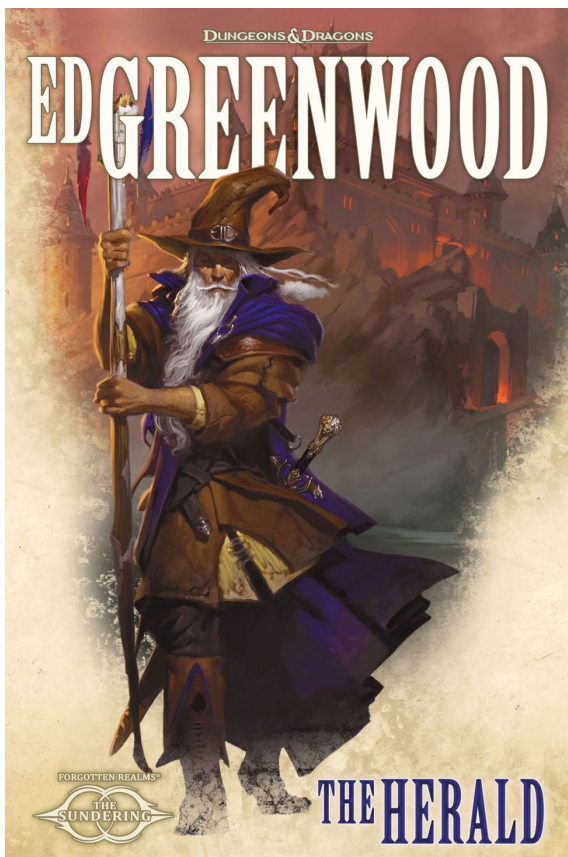
"That way, when I'm writing a scene in Cormyr in one of my novels, and Erin Evans is writing a scene nearby in one of her brilliant novels, I know if a particular noble or peddler can get from one place to another realistically."

Once Greenwood discovered Dungeons & Dragons, it was a natural progression to run adventures based in his fantasy world. As a writer, he recommends other creatives take an active part in roleplaying games as a player or Dungeon Master. In his experience, writers, designers, or critics get far better results when they're part of that vivid experience around a gaming table.

"When bright people do something collaborative, like heavily roleplaying around a table, ideas start flowing, people ask questions and they see things from different viewpoints. The results are likely to be brighter and stronger than one creative brain sitting alone. I know; I've done both!" he advises.

CRAZY NIGHTS

Work, family obligations and geographical distances mean the core group from his original Waterdeep campaign seldom meet up these days. Yet the Company of Crazy Venturers (based in Waterdeep), later superseded by the Knights of Myth Drannor (based in Shadowdale), survived character deaths and retirements from dungeon crawling, with some of their in-game offspring even starting their own adventuring careers. Much like the NPC detail found in Greenwood's books, many of those characters had "day jobs" and investments on top of being adventurers, and the DM often tried to saddle them with political responsibilities, too.



“It literally took them 20 years of real-world playing time to rise to an average of ninth level as characters. We quite often spent four-hour play sessions negotiating and exploring, without ever drawing weapons, although both the Venturers and the Knights had their shares of epic dungeon crawls, too,” the author recalls.



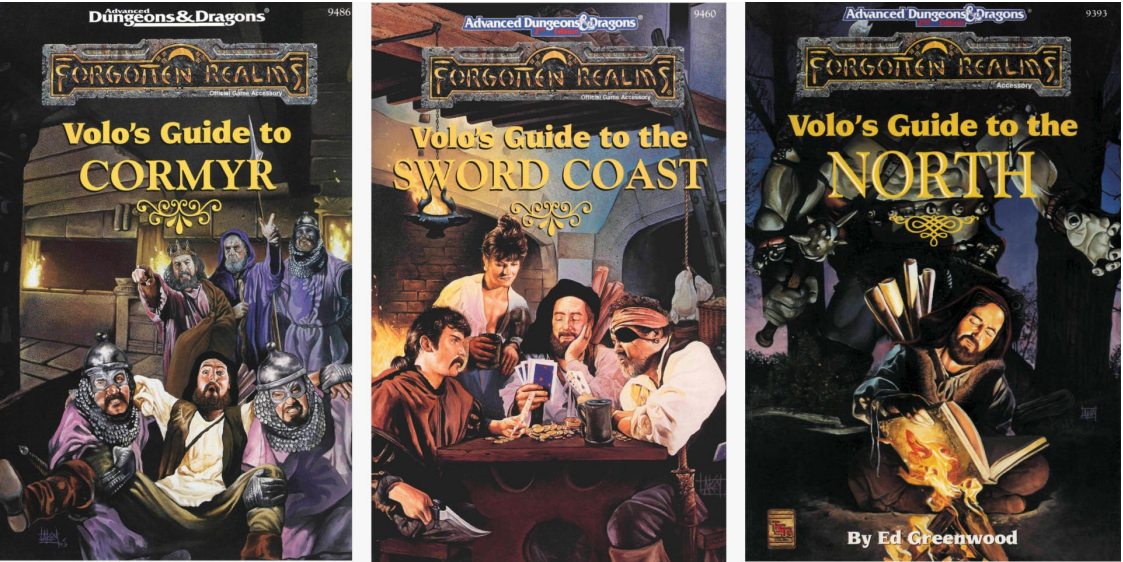
Despite his impressive back catalogue, Greenwood says he still needs a day job, although his work in various public libraries since the spring of 1974 still satisfies his love of books and of connecting readers to them. He’s also no stranger to *Dragon* magazine, although it was called *The Dragon* when he first started writing for it in 1979! His first published piece was about a creature called ‘The Curst’ and he got a thrill from the fine print at the bottom of every *Dragon*’s Bestiary: “As official as anything published in the *Monster Manual*.”

“So I sat down and wrote monsters; *lots* of monsters,” he tells *Dragon*+. “I drew them all with a Staedtler pen as tiny postage-stamp-sized illustrations, which then got blown up in size when printed to look like I’d drawn them with a thick marker! All of my beasties eventually got published, and for a while I got called the ‘Monster Man.’”

VOLO’S GUIDES

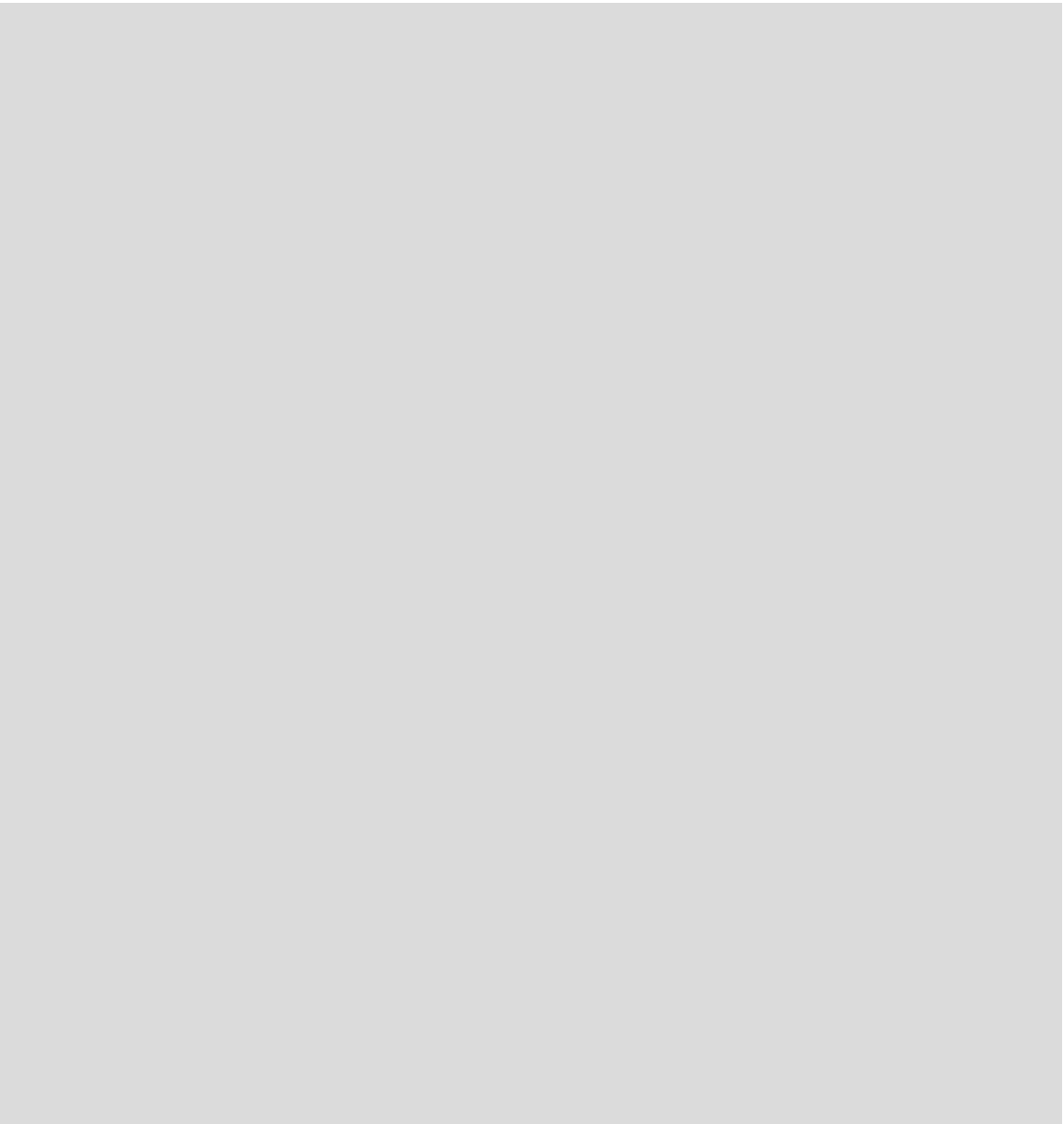
Fans also fondly remember his *Volo’s Guides*, which were written as tourism guidebooks for the Forgotten Realms (“I loved doing them

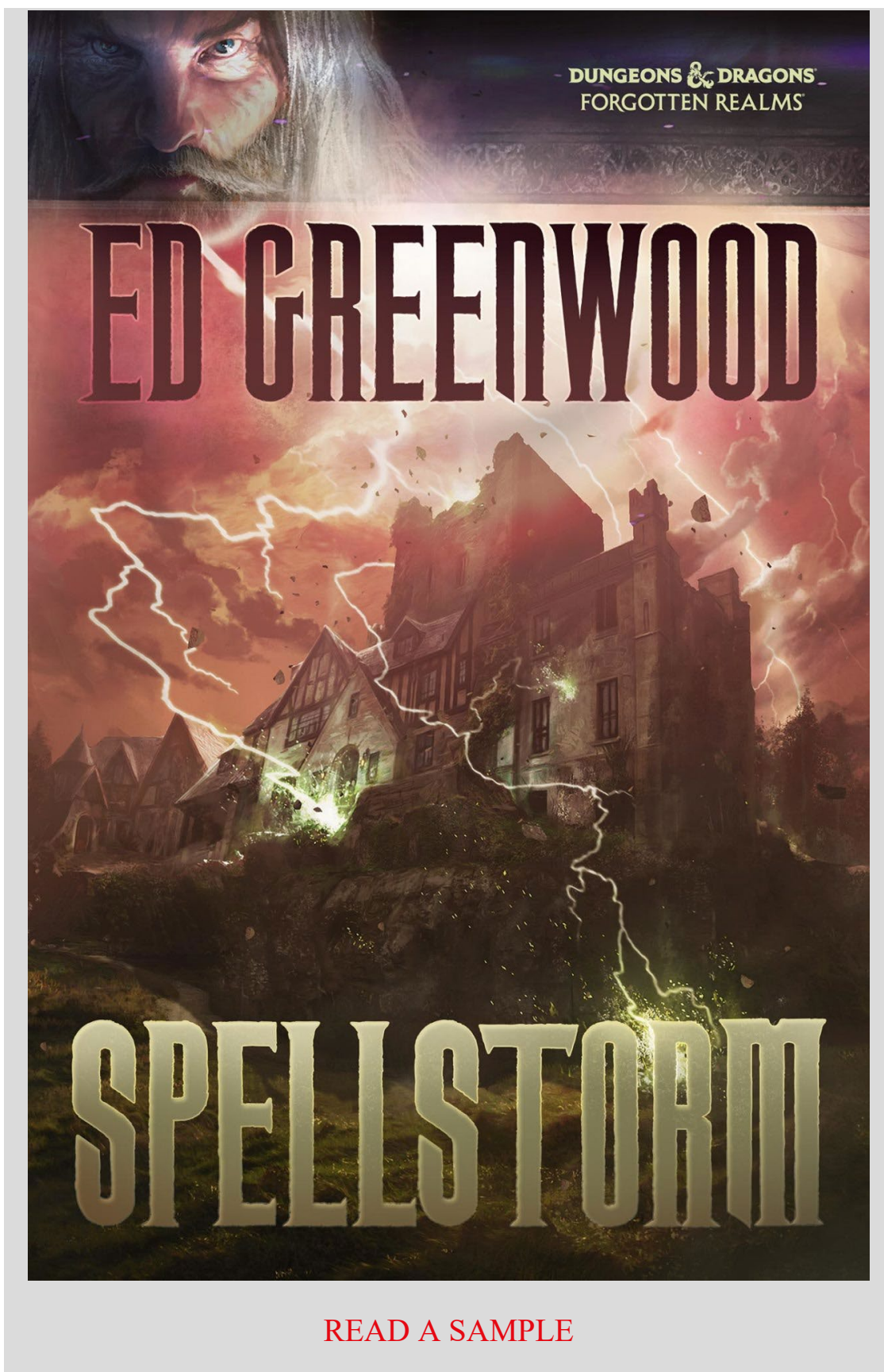
and would happily do more. I think they’re very useful to any Dungeon Master bringing any setting to life, not just the Realms. So gamers who want to see more Volo’s Guides, please let Wizards of the Coast know!”). More recently he’s turned that skill to designing the town of Red Larch for the *Princes of the Apocalypse* module (writing “far more than could be used, of course”).



SPELLSTORM

All of which leads us to his latest novel. Greenwood says *Spellstorm* hearkens back to the genre of English country house murder mysteries, which the board game *Clue* playfully satires. He feels the elements of a creepy, isolated house, in which some circumstance “cuts off” the occupants from the outside world so the reader knows the murderer “must be one of us,” makes for fun storytelling.





[READ A SAMPLE](#)

“In *Spellstorm*, I wanted powerful wizards who suddenly can’t trust their spells, so instead of blasting someone, they have to deal with them like ‘normal’ people do. That brings us a – hopefully fun – closer look at what a lot of powerful mages of the Realms are ‘really like’ in the process,” he says.

When we ask what it feels like to have this world that sprang from his imagination brought to life so vividly in novels, adventures, games and maps he says “wonderful” and “wondrous” with that undying passion, even after fifty years. He also enjoys the many other talented people he’s worked with on the Realms and relishes his “superb and ever-growing collection” of friends from all over the world. Better yet, their involvement allows him to experience the world as other players and readers do.

“Now that I’m not the sole creator, ‘my’ creation can surprise me.

Terry Pratchett and I had a chat about this years ago, at a Toronto Worldcon, about the extra fun of having game designers and filmmakers and computer game designers bringing their own talents to one's own setting. It's like creating a clay model of a dragon and then watching it move by itself, and look at you, and breathe fire," he says with admiration.



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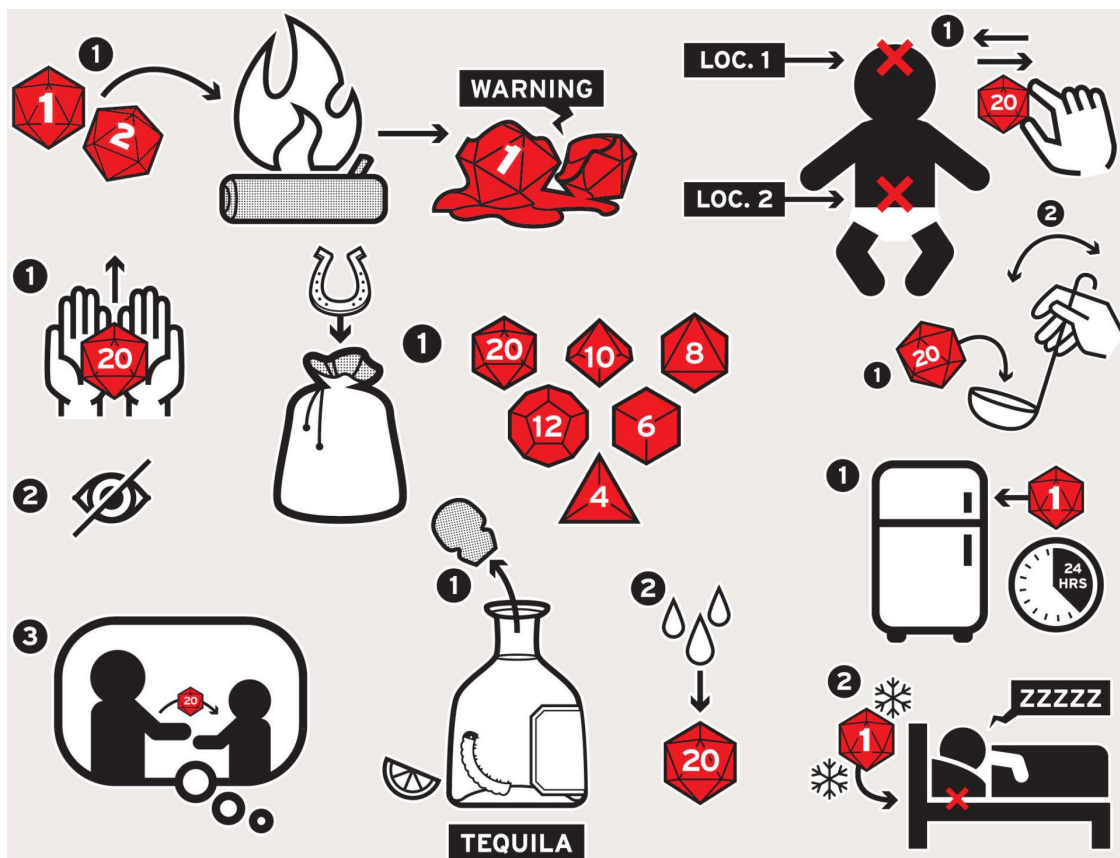
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

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BEAMDOG

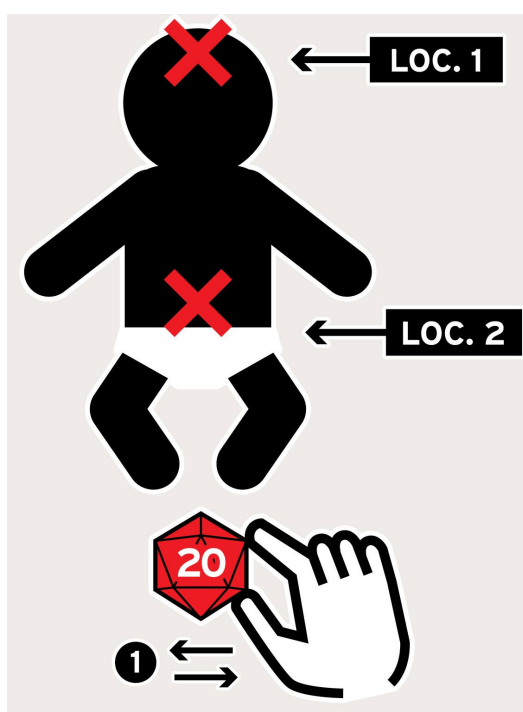
Community: Dice Rolling Rituals

Revealing the unusual customs and habits D&D players live (and die) by.



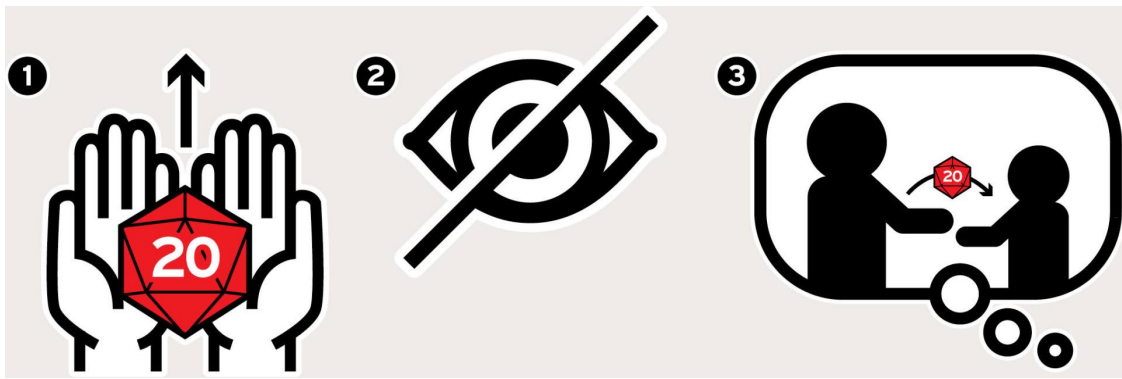
The dice in D&D carry a lot of power. Your fate is (literally and figuratively) in your own hands. Because of that, we know you're not above encouraging fate to lean a little in your favor.

Do you blow on your dice before rolling? Maybe you only roll them to the left of your Player's Handbook? Or you speak an incantation that has seen you through many an important battle? We asked you to share your dice rolling rituals on social media and our website, and you didn't disappoint...



"Clearly, the only way to go is to rub them on the baby's tummy (head if it's really critical). Of course, only do this when things are in dire straits – no need to use up the little one's luck too quickly (although anyone that cute must be able to refill luck pretty fast)."

MATT C



“I’ve had the same set of dice since I started playing thirty years ago. My older brother introduced me to the game and handed me the set when I was eight. We long ago moved to separate coasts of the country and lost contact for the most part, but I still hold the memories of playing with him fondly. I save unleashing the mojo for only when it really counts, but when I do, I hold my dice up high in two hands, close my eyes and picture my big bro handing me the dice for the first time. When the image is particularly crisp, this ritual has never failed to get the results I need.”

TONY M



“At the start of a new campaign I wash my dice with tequila.”

ANDREW L

“In our group, if someone’s dice are rolling poorly, we reset their ‘energy’ by sticking them in the freezer for a few minutes. We also periodically do a hard reset by leaving them in for a day, then sleeping with them under our pillows to ‘retune’ them to our own energy.”

DAVID F

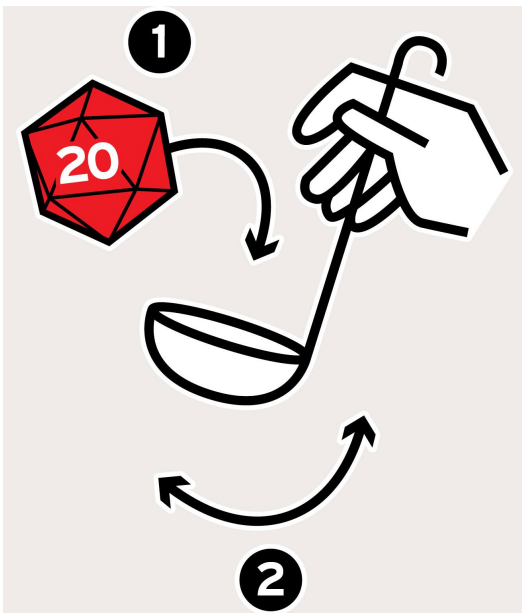


"I keep a tiny horseshoe made of iron next to my dice in my dicebag. When they are on the table, I also set them so the highest number is on the top."

PETER S

"I use intimidation. Dice that roll too low, too often, are cast into the fireplace, then recovered from it and kept half-melted among the others as an example of what happens to traitors."

LORENZO S



“If my dice are failing miserably, I start rolling them in the ‘spoon of nat 20s’. I’m not exactly sure what started the idea to throw dice into a giant brass ladle, but I sure do roll a lot of high numbers when I use it.”

JENNY S

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Adventurers League

All the latest updates from the D&D Adventurers League, plus store profiles of Outlaw Moon Games & Toys in Austin, Texas and Twenty Sided Store in Brooklyn, New York.

Chris Tulach

The D&D Adventurers League is the official public play campaign for the Dungeons & Dragons tabletop roleplaying game, uniting players around the world in a shared experience with regular play at stores, conventions, and other public spaces. You can take your character anywhere official league games are offered – head online to find more information on the D&D [Adventurers League](#).

We've got a lot going on this summer that affects play in the D&D Adventurers League, so let's get right to it.



Elemental Evil Continues

The current storyline season, [Elemental Evil](#), is in full swing. Players can battle against the elemental cults by playing through the *Princes of the Apocalypse* adventure at participating stores through D&D Encounters. Check the [Store](#) and [Event Locator](#) for a venue near you if you'd like to get involved.

In addition to D&D Encounters, a number of specially-crafted D&D Adventurers League adventures are tied to the Elemental Evil storyline. These are offered through the D&D Expeditions program and are available for public play. Each adventure lasts only a few hours, perfect for weekend play or at an event such as a convention. We've chosen the Moonsea region as a current focus for these adventures, and specifically this season we're visiting Mulmaster.

Known as the 'City of Danger,' Mulmaster is an intrigue-laden place, where the tyrannical triumph over the meek. Seeping into the citizenry, the cults of Elemental Evil seek nothing more than the destruction of Mulmaster and its surrounding environs. Who can be trusted, and who is working for the cult? Play through any one (or all) of sixteen different D&D Expeditions adventures this season to find out!

The season continues through July. Currently there are ten adventures available, with the remaining six debuting at conventions this summer. If you're an organizer or Dungeon Master looking to get involved in running D&D Expeditions adventures, more information can be found at the D&D [Adventurers League Organizer website](#).



Gen Con and Rage of Demons

From 30 July to 2 August 2015, Gen Con Indy takes place in Indianapolis, Indiana. This is the granddaddy of hobby gaming conventions, and it's filled with great D&D Adventurers League play.

This year, Gen Con will serve as a preview of the **Rage of Demons** storyline, with four new D&D Adventurers League adventures, including the special adventure *Blood Above, Blood Below*. This is a D&D Epics adventure – a special multi-table interactive adventure that's sure to be the highlight of any player's experience at the convention.

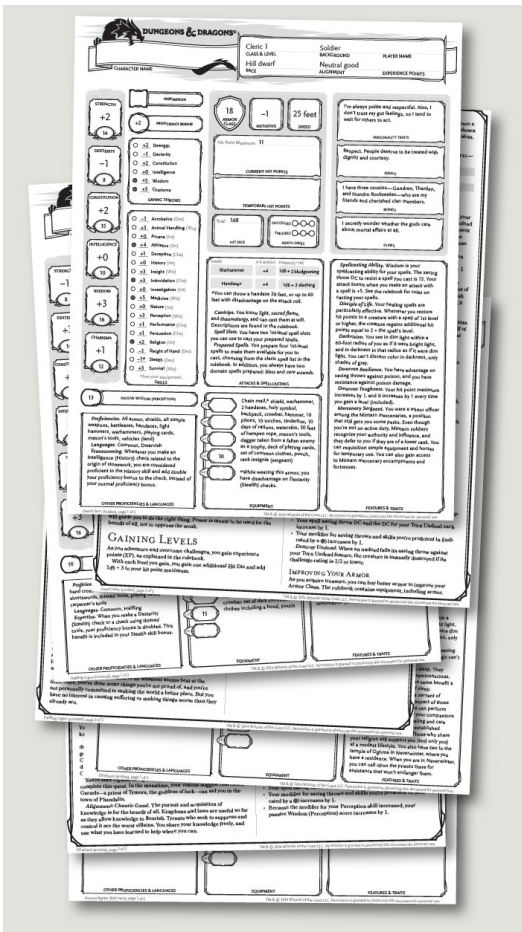
The Rage of Demons season takes our adventurers to the city of Hillsfar, a cruel place that has recently become affected by something stirring in the Underdark below. Get a head start on the story by attending any one of the Gen Con adventures, before the Rage of Demons D&D Encounters and Expeditions season officially begins in September.

If you have a higher-level character from previous D&D Adventurer's League seasons, bring it along to Gen Con. If not, we have a couple of great adventures perfectly suitable to new 1st-level characters. We even have an introductory event that's great if you just want a two-hour taste, and it can be played multiple times with completely different mini-adventures each time!

Head to the **Gen Con** website for event details and more information on what's happening there this year. See you in Indy!

New Pre-generated Characters!

We've had a number of requests for more pre-generated characters of all the *Player's Handbook* classes, and we've delivered!



Download a bevy of 1st-level characters that are playable right away. They’re perfect for using in your first session of D&D Adventurers League play. If you’re a Dungeon Master or organizer, keep a stack on hand for new players, and give them a taste of the options that the *Player’s Handbook* has to offer.

Player’s Handbook Errata

Available now at the [Dungeons & Dragons website](#) is a short errata document for the fifth edition *Player’s Handbook*. Addressing minor typographical and grammatical changes, as well as clarifying a few passages, the errata document helps decipher a few entries in the book. The errata is considered official upon release, and thus is official for the D&D Adventurers League.

TAKE A LOOK

Fun with the Kids!

Our last bit of news is the exciting return of *Monster Slayers: Champions of the Elements*, a kids-themed Dungeons & Dragons play experience designed by Susan J. Morris. It’s perfect for getting the grade school age children in your life into fantasy roleplaying. As an added bonus, the updated *Monster Slayers* features Elemental Evil themed foes. So while you’re fighting off the crazy cultists in the D&D Adventurers League, you can come home and give the kids their own chance to take the bad guys down a peg. **Download it here** now!

That’s all for this time. See you here soon, when we’ll be talking more Rage of Demons and sharing all the latest D&D Adventurers League news.

May your saving throws always have advantage!

Chris Tulach, Program Manager, D&D Organized Play



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PLAYER'S HANDBOOK ERRATA

This document corrects or clarifies certain rules in the fifth edition *Player's Handbook*. Recent printings of the book include revised text that reflects the explanations here.

RACES

Dwarven Combat Training (p. 20). Dwarves are proficient with the light hammer, not the throwing hammer.

Drow Magic (p. 24). Here "once per day" means you must finish a long rest to cast the spell again with the trait.

Infernal Legacy (p. 43). Here "once per day" means you must finish a long rest to cast the spell again with the trait.

BARD

Song of Rest (p. 54). A creature regains the extra hit points only if it spends one or more Hit Dice at the end of the short rest.

FIGHTER

Feinting Attack (p. 74). The advantage is lost if not used on the turn you gain it.

MONK

Deflect Missiles (p. 78). The range of the monk's ranged attack is 20/60 feet.

Eternal Mountain Defense (p. 81). A monk must be 17th level, not 11th, to learn this discipline.

Water Whip (p. 81). This discipline requires an action, not a bonus action.

PALADIN

Divine Smite (p. 85). You can expend any spell slot, not just a paladin spell slot.

RANGER

Ranger's Companion (p. 93). If you are incapacitated or absent, your beast companion acts on its own, focusing on protecting you and itself. It never requires your command to use its reaction, such as when making an opportunity attack.

Bestial Fury (p. 93). When you command the beast to take the Attack action, the beast can attack twice or take the Multiattack action if it has that action.

SORCERER

Flexible Casting (p. 101). The created spell slots vanish at the end of a long rest.

Twinned Spell (p. 102). To be eligible for Twinned Spell, a spell must be incapable of targeting more than one creature at the spell's current level.

Elemental Affinity (p. 102). The damage bonus applies to one damage roll of a spell, not multiple rolls.

Wild Magic Surge (p. 103). If a Wild Magic effect is a spell, it's too wild to be affected by Metamagic. If it normally re-

quires concentration, it doesn't require concentration in this case; the spell lasts for its full duration.

WARLOCK

Quick Build (p. 106). *Ray of sickness* should be *charm person*.

Pact of the Chain (p. 107). When you let your familiar attack, it does so with its reaction.

Pact of the Tome (p. 108). Any cantrip you cast with this feature is considered a warlock cantrip for you.

Eldritch Invocations (p. 110). A level prerequisite in an invocation refers to warlock level, not character level.

Book of Ancient Secrets (p. 110). The rituals needn't be from the same spell list.

WIZARD

Your Spellbook (p. 114). The spells copied into a spellbook must be of a spell level the wizard can prepare.

Spellbook (p. 114). A spellbook doesn't contain cantrips.

Empowered Evocation (p. 117). The damage bonus applies to one damage roll of a spell, not multiple rolls.

Overchannel (p. 118). The feature doesn't benefit cantrips.

EQUIPMENT

Ammunition (p. 146). Loading a one-handed weapon requires a free hand.

Reach (p. 147). This property also determines your reach for opportunity attacks with a reach weapon.

Two-Handed (p. 147). This property is relevant only when you attack with the weapon, not when you simply hold it.

Weapons (p. 149). Unarmed strike doesn't belong on the Weapons table.

MULTICLASSING

Class Features (p. 164). You gain the starting equipment of your first class only.

FEATS

Athlete (p. 165). The third benefit should instead say climbing doesn't cost you extra movement.

Grappler (p. 167). Ignore the third benefit; it refers to a nonexistent rule.

Magic Initiate (p. 168). The feat's limit on casting the 1st-level spell applies only to the casting given by the feat.

Martial Adept (p. 168). The superiority die is added to any others you have, no matter when you gain them.

Polearm Master (p. 168). The bonus attack uses the same ability modifier as the main attack.

Sentinel (p. 169). Ignore "within 5 feet of you" in the second benefit.

Tavern Brawler (p. 170). The feat doesn't give you proficiency with unarmed strikes, since you're already proficient.

Weapon Master (p. 170). The chosen weapons must be simple or martial.

USING ABILITY SCORES

Hiding (p. 177). The DM decides when circumstances are appropriate for hiding. Also, the question isn't whether a creature can see you when you're hiding. The question is whether it can see you clearly.

ADVENTURING

Suffocating (p. 183). If you run out of breath, you can't regain hit points or be stabilized until you can breathe again.

Vision and Light (p. 183). A heavily obscured area doesn't blind you, but you are effectively blinded when you try to see something obscured by it.

Long Rest (p. 186). You regain at least 1 Hit Die when you finish a long rest.

COMBAT

Ready (p. 193). You have until the start of your next turn to use a readied action.

Melee Attacks (p. 195). The rule on unarmed strikes should read as follows: "Instead of using a weapon to make a melee weapon attack, you can use an **unarmed strike**: a punch, kick, head-butt, or similar forceful blow (none of which count as weapons). On a hit, an unarmed strike deals bludgeoning damage equal to 1 + your Strength modifier. You are proficient with your unarmed strikes."

SPELLS

Paladin Spells (p. 209). The spell is *destructive wave*, not *destructive smite*.

Wizard Spells (p. 211). *Trap the soul* shouldn't appear on the spell list.

Mass Cure Wounds (p. 258). This spell's school is evocation, not conjuration.

Mass Heal (p. 258). This spell's school is evocation, not conjuration.

Phantasmal Killer (p. 265). The frightened target makes a save at the end of its turns, not the start.

Polymorph (p. 266). This spell can't affect a target that has 0 hit points.

Revivify (p. 272). This spell's school is necromancy, not conjuration.

True Polymorph (p. 283). This spell can't affect a target that has 0 hit points.

Weird (p. 288). The frightened target makes a save at the end of its turns, not the start.

CREATURE STATISTICS

If in doubt, the *Monster Manual* version of a creature's stat block is authoritative.

MONSTER SLAYERS THE CHAMPIONS OF THE ELEMENTS

A Dungeons & Dragons® Adventure for Ages 6 and Up



Age: 6+

Players: 5–6

Time: 30 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

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INTRODUCTION

Following in the footsteps of the *Monster Slayers: The Heroes of Hesoid*, *Monster Slayers: The Champions of the Elements* captures the flavor of the Dungeons & Dragons® Roleplaying Game in one fast-paced, action-packed package for kids who want to learn the fundamentals of the game. *The Champions of the Elements* is also a fun diversion for experienced players who need their D&D fix but don't have the time for a full-length game.

The Champions of the Elements requires no previous knowledge of Dungeons & Dragons, and all you need to play is included in this adventure, aside from a few dice, pencils, and some friends to play it with.

WHAT YOU NEED

1. 5–6 people, including one person known as the Dungeon Master (that's you!), to lead the story and control the monsters.
2. A print-out of this adventure.
3. Pencils for all the heroes and the dungeon master.
4. Either one twenty-sided die and one six-sided die or three six-sided dice.
5. Scissors.



GETTING STARTED

1. Prepare the Adventure

- a. Print out and read this whole adventure.
- b. Cut out the hero and monster cards.
- c. Cut out the hero and monster tokens. Each one represents a different hero on the map.
- d. Cut out the Hero of the Elements medals.

2. Begin Play

- a. Give one hero card to each player.
- b. Place one monster token on each gate on the map.
- c. Place the hero tokens on the board, around the table in the center.
- d. Read the Adventure Start aloud and start playing!

HOW TO PLAY

Play goes around the table in turns.

Hero Turns: On each hero's turn, a player can move his or her hero up to the hero's speed, use an attack power, and then use a special power (if possible).

Monster Turns: On each monster's turn, the Dungeon Master can move a monster up to its speed, use its attack power, and then use its special power (if possible).

Turn Order: Monster(s) go first. Then heroes go in order of their hero number, lowest number first. If more than one monster is in play, monsters go in order of their monster number, lowest number first, and then heroes. After the monsters and all players have gone, start a new round, monsters first!

ON EACH TURN

On a turn (and this goes for monster turns, too!), a player or the Dungeon Master can move, use an attack power, and use a special power. You can choose to skip one or all of the parts of a turn, and you can do them in any order. For example, Raen may choose to use her attack power, to skip her special power, and to move.

Movement: Your hero can move a number of squares up to his or her speed. This can be done once, but at any time in the hero's turn. All heroes, except for the wizard, must be next to a monster to attack it. Heroes cannot move through obstacles, like tables, braziers, or monsters, but they can move through other heroes as well as the squares that contain the gates.

Attack Power: Your hero uses attack powers to fight monsters. Here is an example attack power:

Massive Axe 1d20 + 5 (or 3d6+2)
Deals 1 point of axe damage

An attack power is made up of the name (such as Massive Axe), what you roll to try to hit a monster (such as 1d20), the number you add to the result of that roll (+ 5), and what happens if you succeed in your roll (such as "Deals 1

point of axe damage”). If you don’t have access to twenty-sided dice, there is an alternative using conventional dice (such as $3d6+2$).

To use a Massive Axe attack power, the player rolls one twenty-sided die and adds 5 to the result. For example, Raen rolls a 10 and adds 5 to get 15. The player announces the result, and the Dungeon Master compares it to the monster’s armor class. If it equals or beats the monster’s armor class, then the attack succeeds. For example, Raen’s 15 is the same as the thunder toad’s armor class of 15, so Raen succeeds in hitting the thunder toad.

Every time an attack against a hero or monster succeeds, fill up one little circle on the corresponding card for each point of damage. When all the circles are filled, if it is a hero, the hero goes unconscious and can be healed by the Dungeon Master. (See Adventure Notes.) If it is a monster, it is defeated and is removed from the map.

So in our example, the thunder toad takes 1 hit point of axe damage, which is recorded by filling in one of the thunder toad’s hit point bubbles.

Note: It is rewarding for players to see the hit points of a monster drop. Keep the hit points visible so that everyone can see how close they are to defeating a monster. You can also use candy, allowing the players to eat a piece of candy for each hit point of damage their heroes deal.

Special Power: Raen’s special power is only used when she is hit by a monster. So, after she hits the thunder toad, she can choose to use her movement or end her turn. Raen chooses to move her speed of 5 squares. Then, once all the other players have gone and the round is over, a new round starts and it is the thunder toad’s turn again.

The thunder toad uses its attack power and hops 5 squares, landing next to Raen.

Attack Power: Thunderous Hop $1d20$

When the thunder toad hops, it lands with terrible thunder, attacking all heroes next to the square in which it lands. Heroes hit by the thunderous hop are knocked to the ground, and instead of moving next turn, must just stand up.

The thunder road rolls a 10, which is greater than Raen’s armor class of 9.

This attack does no damage, but it does knock Raen down. She won't be able to use her movement on her next turn. However, being hit by a monster means Raen can use her special power:

Special Power: Ferocious Warrior

Whenever you are hit, you can shove the monster that hit you up to 2 squares away from you, in any direction.

Raen shoves the thunder toad two squares straight back from her. This means that the thunder toad, no longer next to any heroes and having used up its movement, cannot use its special power:

Special Power: Tongue Tied Attack 1d20 (or 3d6)

And the thunder toad's turn is over.

How to Win

The heroes win when all the monsters have been defeated. Hand out the Hero of the Elements badges to each of the players, and read the Adventure End text.

DEFINITIONS

1d20: One twenty-sided die.

1d6: One six-sided die (a conventional game die).

3d6: This stands for three six-sided dice.

Armor Class: The number that an attack roll must meet or beat in order to succeed.

Attack Power: What a hero or monster uses to attack.

Critical Hit: A natural 20 (or three sixes) results in a “critical hit.” On a critical hit, instead of whatever damage you would normally deal (usually 1 point), you deal 1d6 damage. (Roll a six-sided dice and the result is the amount of damage dealt.) A rogue who is using a special power, which gives double damage, deals 2d6 damage instead of dealing 2 points of damage.

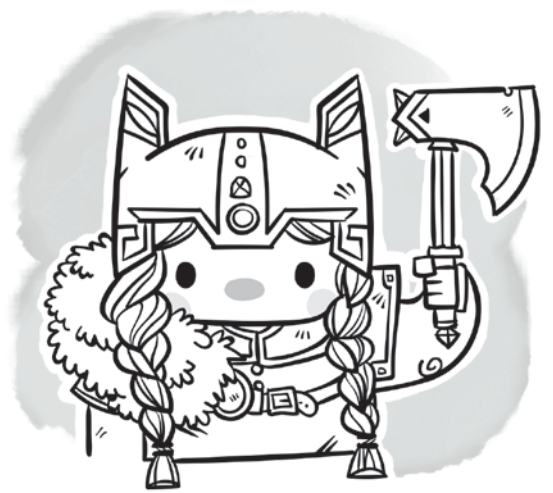
Dungeon Master: The person running the adventure. The Dungeon Master controls all the monsters, announces whose turn it is, reads the adventure, and referees unexpected situations.

Half Hit Points: A monster is considered to be at half its hit points when the Dungeon Master fills up all the hit point circles before the dividing line. Hit Points: 9 ● ● ● ● ● | ○ ○ ○ ○

Hero Number: A hero's number is their place in the turn order. For example, hero #1 goes first, followed by hero #2, and so on.

Hit Points: The number of times a hero or monster can be hit before it falls unconscious or dies.

Line of Sight: If you can draw a straight line between your hero and the monster without running through any barriers, like rocks or barrels, then you have line of sight.



Natural 20: When you roll a twenty-sided die, and the number that comes up is a twenty, you have rolled a natural 20. Natural 20s do not include attack bonuses, or anything else you might add to your roll's result. If you are playing with 3d6 instead of 1d20, the equivalent is rolling three sixes.

Special Power: An additional power your hero has, on top of her attack. Often a special power can only be used when a certain condition is met. For example, Raen can only use her special power when a monster hits her.

Speed: The number of squares a hero can move on his or her turn.



JORICK

Human Fighter, Hero #3

Armor Class: 13

Hit Points: 5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Speed: 5

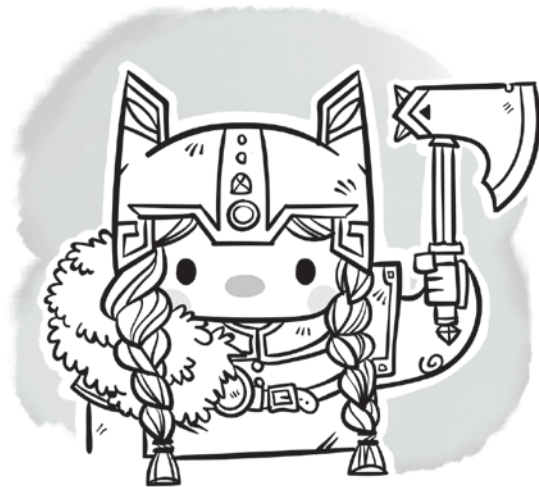
Attack Power: Greatsword Cleave 1d20 + 4 (or 3d6+1)

Deals 1 point of greatsword damage.

Special Power: Charge

If you are not next to a monster at the start of your turn, and there is a monster within 7 squares of you, move up to it and attack (+2 bonus to your attack power roll).

Critical Hit: On a roll of a natural 20 (or three sixes), roll 1d6 for the amount of damage you do.



RAEN "SWORDBREAKER" GROMMEL

Dwarf Barbarian, Hero #2

Armor Class: 9

Hit Points: 7 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Speed: 5

Attack Power: Massive Axe 1d20 + 5 (or 3d6+2)

Deals 1 point of axe damage.

Special Power: Ferocious Warrior

Whenever you are hit, you can shove the monster that hit you up to 2 squares away from you, in any direction.

Critical Hit: On a roll of a natural 20 (or three sixes), roll 1d6 for the amount of damage you do.



EVINDOL

Human Rogue, Hero #1

Armor Class: 11

Hit Points: 3 ○ ○ ○

Speed: 6

Attack Power: Whirling Blades 1d20 + 6 (or 3d6+3)

Deals 1 point of dagger damage.

Special Power: Sneak Attack

If you and a friend stand on the exact opposite sides of an enemy, your attacks do 2 points of dagger damage instead of 1 point of dagger damage.

Critical Hit: On a roll of a natural 20 (or three sixes), roll 1d6 for the amount of damage you do.

YARROW MARSHWALKER

Half-Orc Shaman, Hero #4

Armor Class: 10

Hit Points: 6 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Speed: 5

Attack Power: Vengeful Spirits 1d20 + 3 (or 3d6)

Deals 1 point of spirit damage.

Special Power: Spectral Shackles

If your first attack misses, roll a d20. If you roll an 11 or above, ghostly chains tied your enemy to the ground, and the enemy cannot move on its next turn. (Or, roll 1d6. A 4 or higher succeeds in creating the shackles.)

Critical Hit: On a roll of a natural 20 (or three sixes), roll 1d6 for the amount of damage you do.



BETILIVATIS “BET”

Elf Wizard, Hero #5

Armor Class: 7

Hit Points: 4 ○ ○ ○ ○

Speed: 4

Attack Power: Fireball 1d20 + 7 (or 3d6 +4)

Deals 1 point of fire damage.

Range: You can hit any creature within 6 squares of you, within line of sight.

Special Power: Blastwave

If you hit with your first attack, roll a d20 for each monster standing next to the monster you hit. If you roll a 10 or above, you deal 1 point of fire damage to that monster as well. (Or, roll 1d6. A 4 or higher succeeds in hitting each monster.)

Critical Hit: On a roll of a natural 20 (or three sixes), roll 1d6 for the amount of damage you do.



THE CHAMPION OF WATER

Thunder Toad (Gate #1)

Armor Class: 15

Hit Points: 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○ ○

Speed (hopping): 5

When the thunder toad moves, it hops over large patches of ground, and can end up anywhere within 5 squares of where it was.

Attack Power: Thunderous Hop 1d20

When the thunder toad hops, it lands with terrible thunder, attacking all heroes next to the square in which it lands. Heroes hit by the thunderous hop are knocked to the ground, and instead of moving next turn, must just stand up. (Heroes may still use their attack power and their special power, after they have stood up.)

Special Power: Tongue Tied Attack 1d20

The thunder toad's tongue darts out, trying to grab the hero. If the tongue tied attack hits, the thunder toad successfully wraps its sticky tongue around the hero. If the thunder toad hops while a hero is tongue-tied, the hero moves with the thunder toad. At the beginning of every turn in which the hero starts out tongue-tied, the hero must take 1 point of squeezing damage from the tongue. The grabbed hero can choose to "tickle" the monster. If the grabbed hero attacks, he or she automatically succeeds. If the grabbed hero "tickles," the player rolls 1d20, and if an 11 or higher is rolled, the thunder toad releases the hero—covered in sticky, slimy toad spit. (Or, roll 1d6. A 4 or higher means they succeed in getting the tongue to release them.) A thunder toad can only have one hero tongue-tied at a time. When the thunder toad is defeated, the toad lets any tongue-tied heroes go.

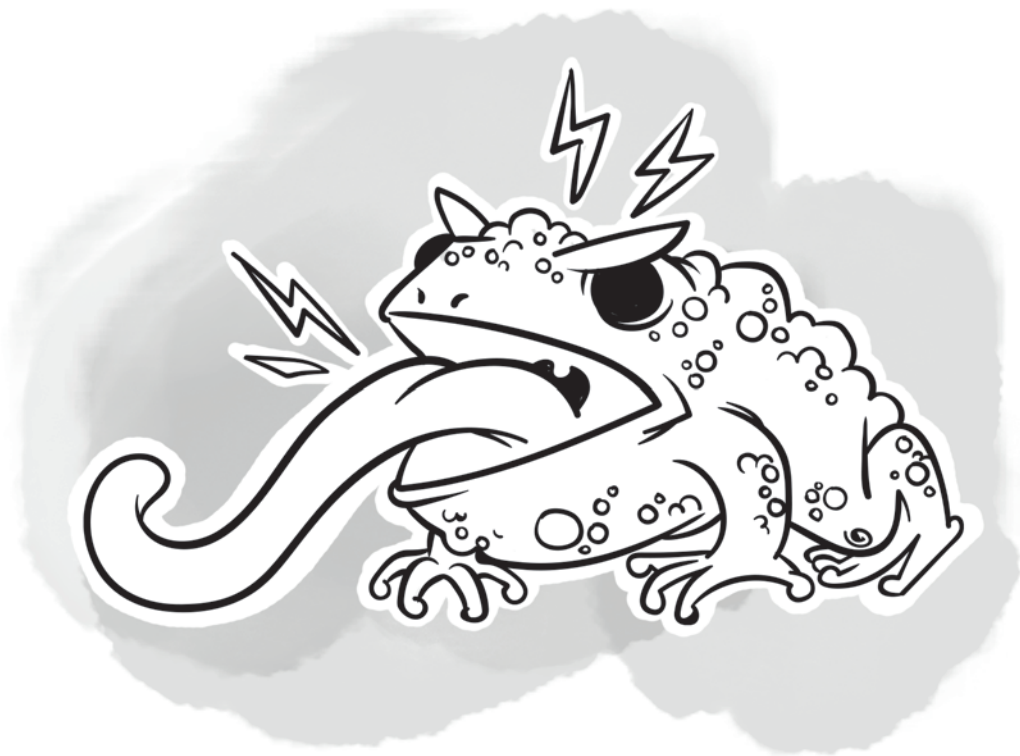
Introducing the Thunder Toad:

A giant blue toad, the size of a carriage but twice as warty, hops out of the gate and lands with a thunder that shakes the ground. Its eyes are black as ink, and when it opens its mouth, a long tongue as thick as your leg lolls out...

Inferna's voice rings out: *"The Champion of Water, a thunder toad!"*

Once It's Defeated:

The giant blue toad gags, lets any remaining heroes go, and tries to pull its tongue back in its mouth—but the tongue has become too big to fit! Dismayed, the thunder toad hops delicately back through the gate from which it came, dragging its ginormous tongue in the dirt behind it. The gate slams shut after it.



THE CHAMPION OF FIRE

Fire Elemental (Gate #2)

Armor Class: 12

Hit Points: 7

- Large Fire Elemental
- ○ Medium Fire Elementals
- ○ ○ ○ Small Fire Elemental

Speed: Large Fire Elemental: 2

Medium Fire Elemental: 4

Small Fire Elemental: 8

Attack Power: Fiery Bite 1d20

The fire elemental bares surprisingly sharp teeth, and tries to bite the hero. If it hits, it deals 1 point fiery teeth damage.

Special Power: Divide and Conquer

When a large fire elemental takes 1 point of damage, it splits into two medium fire elementals, each of which also has 1 hit point. When each of those takes damage, they split again, into a total of four small fire elementals, each of which also have 1 hit point.

Introducing the Fire Elemental:

A bright, fat ball of fire, like an oversized candle-flame, flares up out of the gate for the Champion of Fire. Two giant arms push their way out of its bulbous core, and it blinks open two sun-bright eyes. Its eyes land on you, and it splashes right at you, a ragged grin on its fiery face.

Inferna's voice rings out: *"The Champion of Fire, a fire elemental!"*

Once It's Defeated:

The last little fire elemental sputters, and smokes, and it lets out a yelp of disbelief, before splashing back through the gate from which it came. The gate slams shut after it.



THE CHAMPION OF AIR

Wind Wyvern (Gate #3)

Armor Class: 10

Hit Points: 11 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Speed: 6

Attack Power: Whirlwind Attack 1d20

The wind wyvern spins after one of the heroes. Roll twice and take the best result. If the wind wyvern's attack hits, the hero is sucked up into its whirlwind.

Special Power: Spin Attack 1d20

Once someone is caught in its whirlwind attack, the wind wyvern spins super fast, and then flings the captured hero into another hero. On a successful hit, both heroes are pushed two squares back, and the hero who was landed on takes 1 point of damage. On a miss (or if no one is in range of the wind wyvern's spin attack), the hero who was thrown takes 1 point of damage.

Range: The wind wyvern has a range of 6 squares. If no one is in range to be hit by the spin attack, the hero is thrown a full 6 squares.

Introducing the Wind wyvern:

A long, thin dragon with cloud-colored scales slithers out like a snake, then rears back to balance on its tail. Then, with a manic grin, it starts to spin, slowly at first, and then faster and faster, until it's surrounded by a miniature tornado.

Inferna's voice rings out: "The Champion of Air, a wind wyvern!"

Once It's Defeated:

The wind wyvern stops spinning, and stands there a moment, weaving on its tail as if it were super dizzy—and then it falls over, snout first onto the stone floor, and slithers back through the gate from which it came. The gate slams shut after it.



THE CHAMPION OF EARTH

Mycanoid (Gate #4)

Armor Class: 9

Hit Points: 13 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Speed: 6

Attack Power: Mushroom Goo Attack 1d20

The mycanoid quivers, shivers, and then sneezes out a slimy gob of mushroom snot, right at the hero. If the mushroom goo attack hits, it sticks to the hero's forehead, and a tiny mushroom grows out of it, right between the hero's eyes. It smells like moldy, cheese-riddled socks. The hero takes 1 point of stink damage and is under the effects of mushroom madness.

Range: The mycanoid's mushroom goo attack can hit any hero within 6 squares of it, within line of sight.

Special Power: Mushroom Madness

When a hero is under the effects of mushroom madness, the hero will attack whatever creature is closest, be it hero or monster. Heroes can try to remove the mushroom by rolling 1d20. If a 14 or above is rolled, they successfully peel the mushroom off and it tumbles to the floor and shrivels up. If a 7 to 13 is rolled, they successfully remove the mushroom—only to have it stick to them instead! 6 or below fails, and the mushroom stays stuck to the original hero. (Or roll 1d6. If a 5 or 6 is rolled, the mushroom is peeled off. If a 3 or 4 is rolled, the mushroom sticks to the new hero instead, and if a 1 or 2 is rolled, the mushroom stays where it is.)

Introducing the Mycanoid:

A plump mushroom-shaped creature with a body like soft cheese and a giant blood-colored cap with gaping white teeth shuffles out of the gate on short, thick legs, leaving a yellowish cloud of stink in its wake. It fixes its watery eyes on you and reaches out with its tiny hands...

Inferna's voice rings out: *"The Champion of Earth, a mycanoid!"*

Once It's Defeated:

The plump mushroom squeaks in shock and falls flat on its spongy behind. Eyes wide with disbelief, head turning like an owl's so it can keep an eye on you while it walks, it waddles back through gate from which it came. The gate slams shut behind it.



ADVENTURE START

The most interesting thing about the town where you all live is the small castle carved into the base of a mountain nearby. It has columns and tiny windows and everything—and you are pretty sure it’s haunted. Nobody lives there—nobody has even gone in there in centuries. And yet, at night, sometimes strange lights flash in the windows, sometimes there’s smoke, and sometimes you hear strange sounds: the hiss-crack of a giant fire, the whistling of a strong wind, and a thunderous boom that shakes the ground, and makes the leaves fall off the all the trees outside.

Or at least, that’s what you’re told. You’ve never been there. It’s haunted, after all. But that’s all about to change. You have all been dared to spend one full night in the haunted castle.

That night, you make your way to the castle in the mountain with your sleeping bags and snacks. From the outside, everything is quiet and still. Inside, it’s dark, but the moment you enter, braziers filled with fire spring to life with a whoosh, revealing a large stone room with a wooden table in the center. A table that’s laden down with what appear to be presents: a shining silver sword with the word “Jorick” inscribed on the hilt; a huge axe with the name “Raen” carved on its haft; a pair of fat gold daggers wrapped in paper, with “Evindol” written down the blades in a fine flowing script; a silvery wand with the name “Bet” picked out in tiny crystals; and an emerald staff whose head is carved in the shape of a roaring dragon, to which a tiny note is attached that reads: “To Yarrow.”

But the moment Yarrow’s hand touches the emerald staff, there’s a spray of sparks, followed by the intense aroma of spicy, hot apple cider, and out of nowhere, a grinning woman with hair that looks like it might literally be fire appears as if she’s been waiting all century for you.

Inferna: “Welcome to the Battle of the Elements! I am Inferna, your guide. Today, you prove your bravery, your cleverness, and your skill by fighting the champions of water, fire, air, and earth.”

She gestures at the gates scattered around the arena, behind each of which is a different, terrifying looking monster.

Inferna: *“Should you defeat all four champions, the gifts you hold will be yours to keep, and you will be crowned Heroes of the Elements. Should you fail... [she giggles] Well, don’t fail, all right?”*

Before you can protest, Inferna waves her wand, and a thick line of smoke shoots out of it and hits something above one of the gates. There’s an audible click.

Inferna: *“Let the battle begin!”*

She disappears in another spray of sparks, and the first gate swings open, revealing . . .

[Now it’s the monster’s turn. See How to Play for details.]

ADVENTURE NOTES

Running the monsters:

Monsters like a challenge! In general, monsters like to attack whichever hero has the most hit points, as they find heroes with few hit points to be less of a challenge. They also almost never attack the same hero twice in a row, as that would be boring.

If a monster drops to half its hit points:

Every time a monster drops to half hit points, and there is only one monster on the board, Inferna appears and opens the next numbered gate, unless a hero has fallen. If there are two monsters on the board, Inferna waits until one is defeated before opening another gate.

If a hero has no hit points:

The hero falls unconscious, Inferna waits for the heroes to defeat the monster they are fighting, then:

Inferna gives [all heroes with 2 or less hit points] a glass vial filled with a sparkling, ruby liquid from a pouch on her belt.

Inferna: *“Drink up! You’ll need your strength for the next fight!”*

The liquid tastes like caramel and soot, and you immediately feel better. [The affected players should erase the colored-in circles on their cards. They have returned their heroes to maximum hit points.]

Inferna: “*Better now? Good! Because it’s time to fight the next champion!*”

Before you can protest, Inferna shoots a line of smoke from her wand, and the next gate tears open, revealing . . .

ADVENTURE END

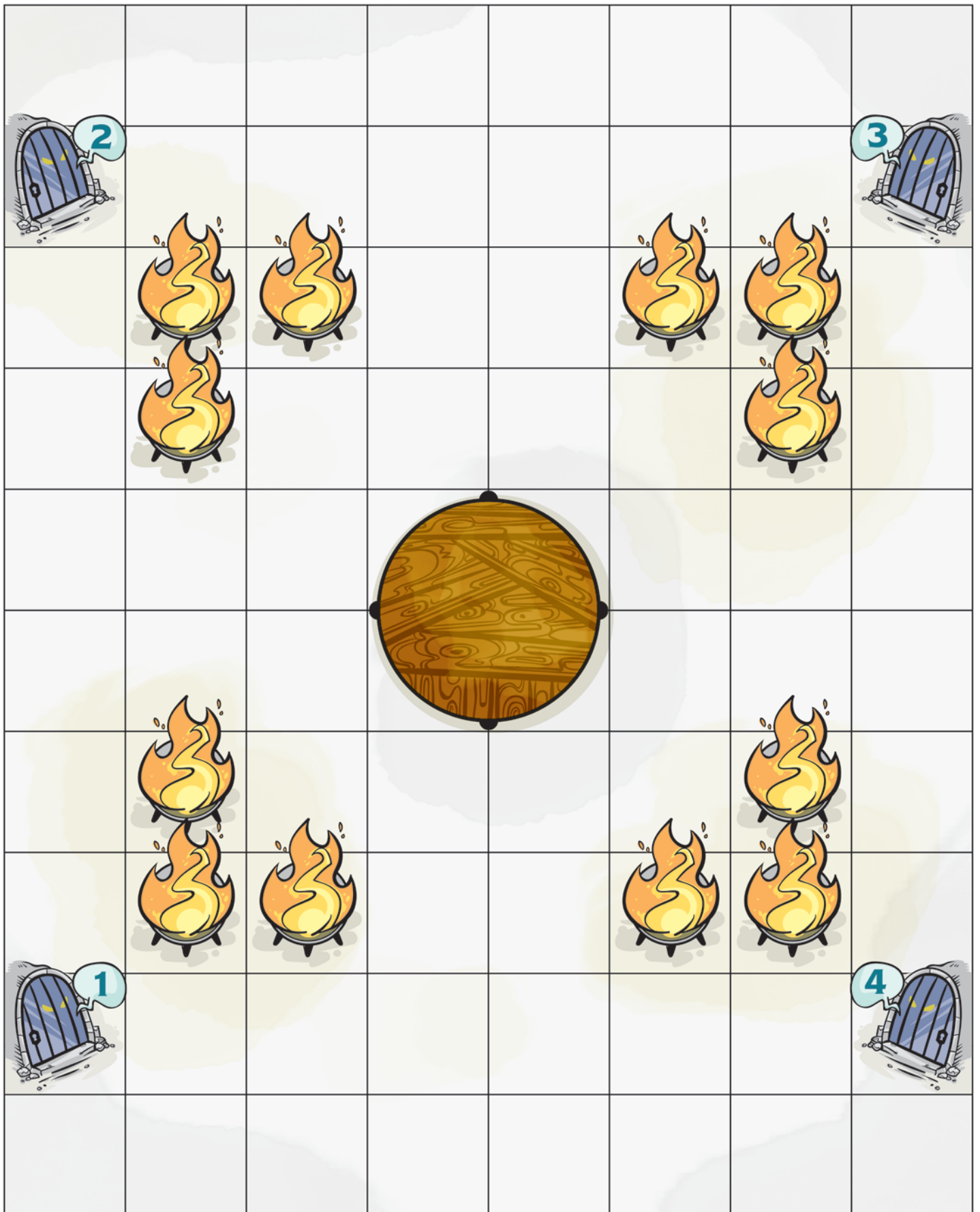
You look around, but all the gates are closed. Inferna appears in a spray of sparks, a large grin on her face, and you see she is holding something in her hands.

Inferna: “*Congratulations! You have defeated the four champions. You are all now Heroes of the Elements. Take these medals as proof of your bravery, cleverness, and skill.*”

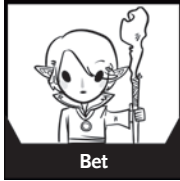
Inferna walks around and hands each one of you a medal.

[Hand out the “Hero of the Elements” medals to players.]





CHARACTER AND MONSTER TOKENS



Bet



Evindol



Jorick



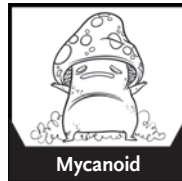
Yarrow



Raen



Fire Elemental (L)



Mycanoid



Thunder Toad



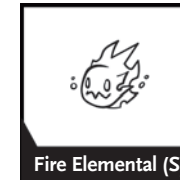
Whirling Wyvern



Fire Elemental (S)



Fire Elemental (S)



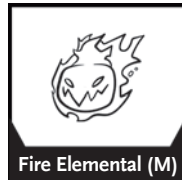
Fire Elemental (S)



Fire Elemental (S)



Fire Elemental (M)



Fire Elemental (M)

Cut out along dark outline

CONTINUE THE ADVENTURE!

The adventure doesn't need to end once the game ends. If you enjoyed the adventure, don't miss the original, *Monster Slayers: The Heroes of Hesiod*.



CREDITS

Written by: Susan J. Morris

Art by: Emi Tanji

Playtesters: Nina Hess, Bruce R. Cordell, Philip Athans, Bart Carroll, Shelly Mazzanoble, and the fantastic kids who attend Gen Con.



Adventurers League Interviews

Matt Chapman

Interview 1: TWENTY SIDED STORE

First opening its doors in April 2011, this store in Williamsburg, Brooklyn has just celebrated its four-year anniversary. Owner Lauren Bilanko (who took these Twenty Sided Store photos, including the one at the very top of this article) began running D&D Encounters as soon as she was able to sanction the first season, which was the *Dark Legacy of Evard* for fourth edition. The season started off with two tables, dropped down to one, and then grew each following season by an additional table until the space was maxed out at seven tables. The New York store's community also participated in the two-year public playtest for fifth edition and has been part of the D&D Adventurers League since the program began in August 2014. For more from Lauren, follow her bi-monthly **Master Dungeon Master** column on the Adventurers League website.



What kind of events do you run in store?

Lauren Bilanko: We currently host D&D Encounters on Wednesday nights and D&D Expeditions on Sunday afternoons. Every week we also run *Magic: The Gathering*, Board Game Social, and ALT.RPG – where we try out an alternative role-playing game, like *Fiasco* or *Numenera*.

What makes a good D&D event?

Being organized and having fun! People come out to a store to play D&D regularly, to meet new people, and to socialize.

What preparation do you do before a session?

I like to have a very clear idea of what the overall story is that I am trying to tell. I think about how I am going to get the party from point A to point B in a pre-determined amount of time, and I usually let the rest happen at the table. For me D&D is a shared storytelling game and I find it really satisfying when as the DM I get to be surprised from time to time as well.





How do you incorporate new D&D adventures into your events, for example the recent Elemental Evil storyline?

We follow the release schedule provided by Wizards of the Coast organized play. When each new season begins, so do we. Once I have the module, I figure out how many weeks are in the season. Then I decide how to break up the sessions based on what we need to get through and how much time we have to do it in.

What tips would you offer other retailers who join the D&D Adventurer's League?

Provide a safe environment where players can have fun. Create a community that is welcoming to everyone, especially new players. Building a social outlet for your customers creates word of mouth – and that can sometimes be the best form of advertising for your store.





Interview 2:

OUTLAW MOON GAMES

“We’re a fairly new offshoot of [Austin Books & Comics](#), which has been around for 38 years,” says Brandon Zuern, store manager of [Outlaw Moon Games & Toys](#) in Austin, Texas. “We opened Outlaw Moon on Labor Day weekend in 2013. The opportunity to create a new space dedicated to games popped up, and I finally got to bring my interest and passion for the hobby into my professional world.” The store has been involved with the D&D Adventurer’s League since the fifth edition started: “Way back in the tiny Forgotten Realms town of Greenest,” adds Casey Shelton, games expert and Dungeons & Dragons lead at Outlaw Moon. It’s left the pair with a nice problem to solve. “The main challenge is, where do we put everybody?” says Zuern. “The store fills up fast on D&D night.”



What’s your store’s history with D&D?

Brandon Zuern: When we were envisioning Outlaw Moon, one of the things I wanted to feature was vintage D&D rulebooks and modules. They’re so classic and cool, and they bring back a flood of great

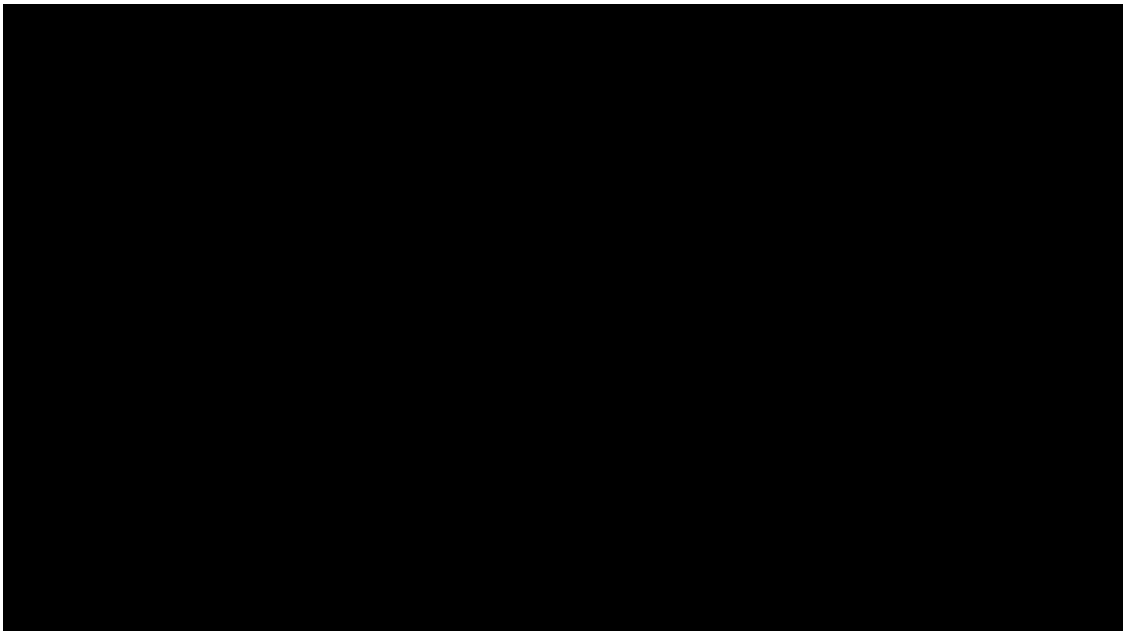
memories for anyone that's played them. We also knew that D&D fifth edition was coming up, and we were prepared to embrace the new edition. It really delivered.

What kind of events do you run in store?

BZ: Our Adventurer's League is our biggest night. We also have *Magic: The Gathering* on Friday nights, where I focus on teaching newcomers how to play, and a popular tabletop game on Saturday night. We're working on adding more, as well.

Casey Shelton: Our Adventurer's League players have started showing up at all our events – they're easily our most loyal customers. Every week we have about twenty to twenty-five players in our Adventurer's League, playing with three (soon to be four) different Dungeon Masters. With new players every week, and next to no drop off in attendance, we're bringing in another DM to help lighten the load.

BZ: Outlaw Moon also hosts a web show following four new D&D players, and I DM for that. It's called **Heroes of Awesome**. We're having a blast filming our campaign, and getting great feedback from fans that are interested in playing or getting back into the game.



What preparation do you do before a session?

CS: Since we're so very lucky to have such loyalty to our games, I can take a look at the night's adventure and look for ways to hook it into the growing mythology my players are making for their characters. It's deeply rewarding to see the surprise when I connect seemingly random encounters to their hero's personal experiences.

BZ: I just make sure I have my character sheet and dice ready. It's one of the few store-related events I get to enjoy as a fan, rather than the boss, and it's one of my favorite times of the week.



What makes a good D&D event?

CS: Be welcoming. With a steady stream of new people becoming interested in D&D we always have level appropriate pre-generated characters available for anyone who happens to stop in. Then we let the new player know that if they want to come back and play more often, and they always do, they can come into the store at any time to craft a character to their exact liking.

BZ: The most important thing is that everyone has fun. I look and listen to what's happening in the store. If there's laughing and carrying on, it's the best D&D event possible. And the more fans we have sharing in the critical hits and fails, the better.

CS: Some people are going to like the roleplaying, while others want to smash monsters, so it's about finding that balance.



What tips would you offer other retailers who join the D&D Adventurer's League?

BZ: Find a great Dungeon Master. We are incredibly fortunate to have four employees that *love* Dungeons & Dragons, so we had a great starting point. Also, promote the game heavily. What I learned when we opened the store is that a lot of people are curious about playing D&D, but they don't know how to get involved.

CS: Encourage newcomers in any way you can, and they'll get hooked not only on the game, but on the store itself.

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Next Issue: Dragon 03



As you fight against the evil elementalists that threaten the Sword Coast, you're probably looking forward to a well-earned vacation. The less-deadly weather conditions should certainly make that a possibility. Yet if you've lived in the Forgotten Realms for any length of time, you'll be aware that as one enemy falls, another is always looking to rise...



Following the critically-acclaimed Tyranny of Dragons and Elemental Evil storylines, Rage of Demons will transport characters to the deadly Underdark. Rumors of powerful demon lords terrorizing the denizens of this underworld have begun to filter up to the cities of the Sword Coast. The names Demogorgon, Orcus and Graz'zt have all been spoken in hushed tones and the area's already fearsome caverns have been thrown into ultimate chaos, madness and discord.

Still, it's not all bad news. If you dare to descend into the Underdark, you'll fight alongside iconic hero Drizzt Do'Urden – and we'll be speaking to Drizzt's creator R.A. Salvatore about his renegade drow. He'll tell us about his new novel, Archmage, which is scheduled for release in early September, as well as the unique set of quests he's written for the Neverwinter MMORPG.

The Rage of Demons storyline begins in Fall 2015 – on computer, console and tabletop – and we'll have news about every version of this epic tale in Issue 3 of Dragon+.

(Contents subject to change)

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